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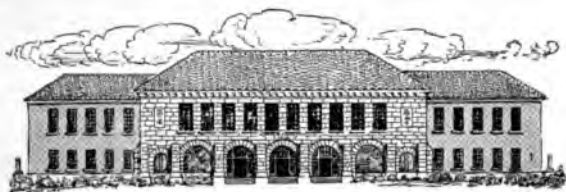
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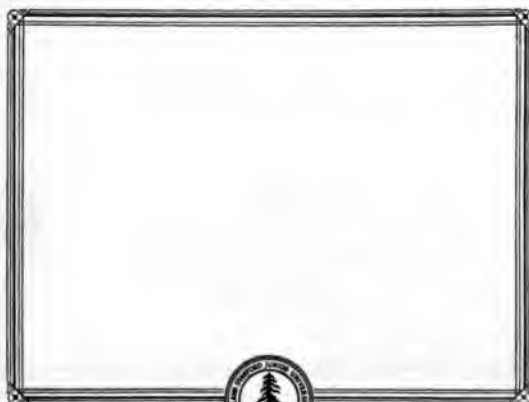
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A HISTORY OF THE ADULT SCHOOL MOVEMENT.

1921

1922



SAMUEL FOX, OF NOTTINGHAM.

A History of the Adult School Movement in the United States

by William Brewster

with an Introduction by
John H. Johnson

THE ADULT SCHOOL MOVEMENT
IN THE UNITED STATES
1860-1900

1900



62 FOX, OF NATHAN.

A History of the Adult School Movement.

By

J. Wilhelm Rowntree

and

Henry Bryan Binns.

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PREFACE.

THE appearance of this little volume requires a brief note of preface. The chapters which follow were printed, practically in their present form, as a series of articles in the PRESENT DAY PAPERS, during the latter half of 1902.

They are the joint work of the Editors of that journal ; the purely historical chapters having fallen to the share of Henry B. Binns.

The papers, now amended and published in book form, do not pretend to any lofty historical ambition. They are professedly slight in character, being designed to throw light upon a little understood, but deeply interesting, phase of religious work, and to serve as an introduction and stimulus to the knowledge and support of the Adult School Movement whose characteristics they discuss.

The writers desire to express their great indebtedness to Frederic Taylor, the Secretary of the Friends' First Day School Association, for his valuable assistance in supplying the necessary statistics and in the criticism of the proofs.

Their cordial thanks are also due to all who have rendered help by their valuable suggestions, or as proof readers have contributed to the accuracy of this little historical sketch.

J. WILHELM ROWNTREE.

CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF THE ADULT SCHOOL MOVEMENT AND ITS RELATION TO THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS, &c.

[Adult School dates in large type, events in Quaker history, &c., in italics].

- 1782. Robert Raikes's first Sunday School established.
- 1791. Death of John Wesley.
- 1798. Nottingham Adult School opened.
- 1804. Bible Society founded.
- 1806. Abolition of Slave Trade.
- 1808. British and Foreign School Association founded.
- 1810. *Friends' Sunday School (boys), at Bristol.*
- 1811. Adult Bible Classes at Bala opened by Rev. Thos. Charles.
- 1812. Adult Bible Classes at Bristol opened by Wm. Smith and others.
- 1813. *Elizabeth Fry first visits Newgate Prison.*
Regular Morning Bible Reading introduced at Ackworth School.
- 1815. Period of international reaction following the humiliation of France.
- 1816. Adult Schools at Leeds and York.
Peace Society founded.
- 1822. Adult Schools opened by Thomas Cooper at Leicester.
- 1824-5. *Publication of J. J. Gurney's Distinguishing Views and Practices of the Society of Friends, and Essays on Christianity.*
- 1828. Women's Adult School (Friends') at Bristol.
Hicksite separation (U.S.A.) Death of Jonathan Dymond.
Repeal of Test Act.
- 1829-30. Revolution in France : followed by period of reform.
- 1830. *Publication of J. J. Gurney's Biblical Notes and Dissertations.*
- 1833. "Tracts for the Times" begin to appear at Oxford.
Admission of Friends to Parliament.
Yearly Meeting Committee unable to recommend formation of Foreign Mission Society.
- 1836. *Beaconite controversy and separation.*
- 1837. *First Meeting of Education Society.*
Emancipation of British West Indian slaves.
- 1842. Joseph Sturge in Nottingham.
- 1843. *Death of William Allen.*

- 1845. Severn Street Adult School founded by Joseph Sturge.
Friends' Sunday School, Sheffield, opened by Jas. Hy. Barber.
Death of Elizabeth Fry.
- 1846. World's Temperance Convention in London.
Repeal of Corn Laws.
- 1847. Formation of Friends' First-day School Association. Joseph Storrs
Fry, hon. sec. School for Adults and Boys at Middlesborough.
Death of Joseph John Gurney.
- 1848. William White in Birmingham (aged 28).
Revolution in Europe.
Flounders Institute founded.
- 1850. Young Men's Class at Sheffield.
- 1851. Religious Census. *Decline in Society of Friends noted.*
- 1856. First visiting deputation of F.F.D.S.A.
Huddersfield Adult School.
- 1857. Bristol Adult School. York Adult Scholars "meet in a separate
room," (Lady Peckitt's yard).
- 1859. Death of Joseph Sturge. Leeds and Dewsbury Adult Schools.
- 1860. Hitchin Adult School.
Yearly Meeting collects and publishes statistics of the Society.
- 1861. Plymouth Adult School.
Leicester Adult School.*
- 1862. Luton Adult School.
Melbourne (Australia) Adult School.
- 1863. William White reads a paper on *Senior Scholars* at Leeds F.F.D.S.A.
Conference.
- 1865. Severn Street Meeting for Worship, once a month, and
"Reading Meetings" at Leeds.
Birmingham scholars visit Bristol.
- 1866. Scarborough Adult School.
Bedford Institute Association for London Mission work.
- 1867. Darlington and Colchester Adult Schools.
- 1868. *Friends' Foreign Mission Association founded.*
- 1869. Norwich and Leeds (York Road) Adult Schools.
*The Monthly Record, a Journal of Foreign and Home Missions, First-day Schools, Temperance
and other Christian work in the Society of Friends,—published at Birmingham.*

* A writer in *One and All*, 1898, gives the date as 1858, and the locality as Elbow Lane,

1870. West Bromwich (Ebenezer Chapel) Adult School opened by John Blackham.
Education Act passed.
1871. Sanveygate (non-Friends') Adult School, Leicester.
Various non-Friends' Schools started in Birmingham by an inter-denominational Committee.
York Adult School Temperance Society establishes a Coffee Cart Co.
1872. *Yearly Meeting Conference on Christian Work and Y.M. recognition of F.F.D.S.A.*
1874. Severn Street Christian Society.
The Adult becomes the larger section of F.F.D.S.A.
F.F.D.S.A. Conference at Darlington.
1875. Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Movement commences in the Midlands.
Reading and Bradford Adult Schools.
1876. First conference of (Yorkshire) scholars and teachers at Sheffield.
Barnsley Adult School.
1877. Church of England Adult School at St. George's, Birmingham.
1882. *Monthly Record of Friends' Adult Schools and Home and Foreign Mission Work*, new and cheaper issue.
1882. *Friends' Home Mission Committee appointed.*
1883. Birmingham scholars begin to carry on Children's Schools.
Music taught at Ackworth School.
1884. Midland Adult Sunday School Association (inter-denominational) formed.
1885. Sheffield "Christian Society" founded.
1886. Carrow (non-Friends') Adult School, Norwich.
1888. Burnham Adult School (Somerset).
1889. Unions of Adult Schools formed in Leicestershire and London.
1890. Union of Adult Schools formed in Somerset. F.F.D.S.A. Conference in Birmingham.
1891. *One and All* published. *Monthly Record* ceases.
1893. F.F.D.S.A. reorganised ; John T. Dorland, secretary.
Leicestershire United Summer Outing inaugurated.
Social Clubs formed in Birmingham and York.
1894. *Re-organisation of Home Mission Committee.*

x. *A History of the Adult School Movement.*

1895. *One and All* becomes organ of F.F.D.S.A.
Manchester Conference on Social Questions, Modern Thought, etc.
1897. Yorkshire Adult School Co-operative Holiday inaugurated.
Scarborough Summer School for Religious Study.
1899. National Council of Adult Schools formed—Dr. Newman, hon.
secretary.
First "Directory of Adult Schools" published.
1900. Death of William White. N.C. takes over *One and All*.
1901. Severn Street Adult School Council formed.
Friends' Settlement for Religious Study at Scarborough.
1902. Appointment of an organising secretary to National Council
(Edwin Gilbert, of Leicester).

NOTE.—An early Adult School held in the vestry of the Methodists' Chapel, Killigrew Street, Falmouth, is thus described in the *Falmouth Guide* for 1815 :

"A school for teaching adults to read was instituted by an association in February, 1814, which is supported by their subscriptions and donations. The object of the institution is to teach persons of both sexes, above sixteen years of age, to read the Holy Scriptures ; and, though it has existed but a short time, several elderly persons have been qualified for the end proposed."

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CHAPTER I.

THE NEED FOR ADULT SCHOOLS.

IN the following pages we shall endeavour to outline the history of the Adult School Movement, its present scope and its future prospect ; and to set forth in part the religious and social conditions which have given the Adult Schools their vogue, stimulated their growth, and determined their character.

But before turning to their history the reader may incline to ask what exactly is the function of the Adult Schools in relation to the embarrassing profusion of Christian sects ?

{ Do the Adult Schools, as a matter of fact, meet any distinct and imperative need ?

We shall do well in view of such a question, and by way of introduction, to devote a brief space to its consideration.

Some Religious Statistics.

In his volume of essays, entitled *Studies by the Way*, Sir Edward Fry discusses the subject of "Sermons." He reckons in 1898 "an annual output" in the Established Church of 1,664,000 sermons. He takes "Dissenting sermons" at an equal figure, and so arrives at a grand total of 3,328,000 sermons preached in 1898. Having obtained this result, he goes on to comment upon the vagueness of thought and the indirectness of expression which characterises so much preaching. ". . . the ordinary preacher is afraid to call a spade a spade ; he would rather describe it as that instrument of agriculture with which our first father laboured when, by the providence of God, he was called on to till the garden of Eden." ". . . "It is not that the moral virtues are not spoken of, but

that they are not applied to the particular cases of the congregation. It seems sometimes as if there were a kind of convention that even the moral duties shall not be pressed home—that enough shall be said to enable you to apply it to your neighbour, not enough to make you feel that you yourself are hit.” And Sir Edward Fry quotes Increase D. O’Phace in *Biglow Papers* to support his views :

I’m willing a man should go tollable strong
 Agin wrong in the abstract, for thet kind of wrong
 Is ollers unpop’lar and never gits pitied,
 Because it’s a crime no one ever committed.
 But he must not be hard on partickler sins,
 Coz then he’ll be kickin’ the people’s own shins.

Sir Edward Fry’s figures are undoubtedly below the mark. In 1902 there were among the Free Churches 9,213 stipendiary ministers, and 50,479 local preachers. If we assume that each minister preaches twice and each local preacher once a week, we get 68,905 sermons in a week. We may safely take the figures at 70,000, and thus arrive at 3,640,000 Free Church sermons in a year. Even if we knock off the old figures to allow for increase since 1898 we must swell Sir Edwards figures into a total of $4\frac{1}{2}$ millions. For present purposes we shall be well within the mark in assuming that no less than five million sermons have been preached in England and Wales during 1902.

Against this fact let us set another.

On March 17th and 24th, 1901, a Church census was taken in York.* The average morning attendance of adults at church, chapel, and mission for the two Sundays was found to be 7,315, and in the evening 9,745. The total attendances for both Sundays were 14,190 men and 19,931 women.

It was estimated upon inquiry that about half of the morning congregations attended again in the evening, and if this estimate is at all near the truth we get 13,402 as the average adult attendance at places of worship in York. The population of this city is 77,914, and the number of persons over sixteen years of age approximately 48,000, so that it appears that our

* *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, by B. S. Rowntree, p. 345 seq.

total attendance only represents 28 per cent. of the adult population, leaving 72 per cent. to be accounted for.

The population of England and Wales at the last census was given at 32,526,075. Assuming the age distribution to be as in 1891, we should get in round numbers upon the basis of the York figures, 16 million adult non-attenders and 6 million adult attenders.

In a statement made by Howard Evans in February, 1902,* upon the membership of the churches in England and Wales, the following table appears :—

Churches.				Sittings.	Communicants.
Established	...	...	...	7,000,375	1,974,629
Free	...	...	...	8,139,219	1,945,932
				<hr/> 15,139,594	<hr/> 3,920,561

Roughly then, upon the York basis, there would seem to be in England and Wales 16 million adult non-attenders and 6 million adult attenders ; while the church statistics show 15 million sittings,† and 4 million communicants.

These figures can be scarcely more than a suggestion of the truth, but if the six million attenders were increased to seven millions we are still left with the result that above two-thirds of the adult population of England and Wales are either non-attenders at public worship or outside the pale of organised Christianity.

Two out of every three Adults in England and Wales have not heard the five million sermons preached in 1902.

If it is a question whether there be in this country a free field for the Adult School Movement, then in this sombre fact of religious indifference we find our sufficient answer.

But even then has the Adult School a legitimate place in view of the existence of so many other Christian organisations ? The evidence that there is virgin soil is after all no proof that the Adult School should till it.

* See leaflet published by the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control.

† It must be remembered that in contrasting the 15 million sittings with the figure of 6 million attenders reckoned upon the York basis, that the latter includes only adults over 16 and takes no count of children, while it is on the other hand notorious that many chapels and churches are often only half filled.

Failures of the Churches.

Let us approach the matter from another side. Why have the Christian Churches after so long an occupation failed in so extraordinary a measure to win the sympathy and adherence of men? What is it, for instance, that alienates so many artisans from church fellowship? It is a striking fact that the ethical teaching of Jesus is accepted with cordial approval by men who can only find bitter words for the very churches which it is assumed set forth this teaching and inculcate its practice.

Practical Insincerity.

One partial explanation has been given. There can be no doubt that a serious proportion of the sermons preached are at heart insincere and lack the nervous vitality of spiritual energy, the intuitive sympathy of love, and the directness of truth. There broods over too many congregations a spirit of complacent conventionalism. So little does the united worship stand for the reality of spiritual communion that the meanest jealousies, fanned by some trivial occasion into feud, may often rend a congregation into miserable cliques. The social vice of "snobbery" has many ecclesiastical forms. The wealthy members receive the homage of poorer aspirants to social fame, and the higher dignitaries of the church, whether Anglican or other, receive an admiring reverence no worthier than the vulgar admiration for a lord.

Such an atmosphere, and it is, alas, too common, is wholly exclusive. It is not the glorious message of freedom and goodwill, of Divine humanity and untrammelled brotherhood, so much as the material prosperity of the chapel or church which animates these close "religious" clubs. A good choir, a good organ, an eloquent preacher, flowing funds, and here is a "successful" place of worship—a thing to be envied and admired by less favoured people. The leading member may own a shop manned by underpaid assistants, he may be harsh in business relations, "near" and grasping; but let him be a "successful business man," subscribe largely to the funds, occupy a prominent pew, appear regularly at service in the immaculate costume prescribed by the all-pervading spirit of British Pharisaism—that most nauseous of all the Pharisaisms in the world—and no questions will

be asked. Nay, rather "our dear brother" will open the church or chapel bazaar, and still further enhance his good repute by his "capital speech" and his "handsome donation."

Even in the homeliest congregations we meet with the same evil of practical insincerity. It is surprising how often the "local preacher" is distrusted and disliked, how often his fervent periods in the pulpit are contrasted, to his disadvantage, with his conduct in the "shop." We believe that this practical insincerity of professing Christians has done more to weaken the claims of the Church of Christ than any other single cause. This unbrotherly spirit exists, of course, in varying form and degree, as do also the external or material conceptions of worship. Not everywhere are the outward marks so unlovely. Nevertheless it is difficult to exaggerate the extent to which the narrowness of the Pharisee prevails in essential opposition, if in formal obedience, to Him who called all that laboured and were heavy laden to rest in His peace.

Allied with this want of practical application is the tendency to exaggerate the importance of ecclesiastical affairs at the expense of the living problems of real experience. The Ritualist quarrelling about the Eastward position, or the Nonconformist over some church appointment, lives in a world in which the values are false and the proportions woefully distorted. It is not likely that the ordinary toiler will be attracted to such disputes. To offer these things is to give stones for bread. Questions of theology have, under the influence of this atmosphere, suffered the doom of unreality. Discussed only too often in remoteness from the facts of life, they have involved an emphasis upon the interpretation of spiritual things rather than upon the *living possession* of them. If a man be orthodox he may pass muster, though he be eaten through with selfishness, that deadliest disease of the spiritual world. Standards of worldliness remain superficial. Does a man smoke, go to the theatre, and play cards,—he is anathema. He may be wordly or spiritual,—very often perhaps the former,—but the outward facts are sufficient, and no more is asked. A stunted view of life which regards the whole-hearted, all-round development of the human faculties as incompatible with the religious spirit, breeds a sterile "Christianity" that alienates when it would attract. There are sure instincts which warn us of the ultimate futility of other-worldliness, and

when religion is so misconstrued these instincts drive many from their allegiance to the faith.

Intellectual Insincerity.

Nor can we forget the modern spirit of criticism which consciously and unconsciously affects so many. *Ex cathedra* claims of authority, whether for the Church or for the Bible, are effective only when obscurantism is assured. The guns of the enemy have made too many breaches for the pretence of unshaken and unquestioned dogma to be longer maintained.

As yet, apologetics are too often unworthy of the name. The average layman may not understand his own difficulty, but he is aware of a changed feeling about the Bible. It is not to him the book that it was to his father, and this quite apart from Biblical criticism. The silent but universal change in mental attitude which lies even beneath much that is unimpeachably orthodox has affected him. He is waiting now in suspense. He does not perhaps understand the critics. But he has that within him which in the long run will respond to truth, and with the appeal of truth new life will break forth.

The people know at heart, whatever the pulpit may say, that there is something kept back. Want of candour and courage, the mistaken desire to save the faith of those who have been nurtured in the old teaching and remain untouched by the new, for how much is this not answerable? Too many things are done, or rather not done, in the name of discretion, that admirable virtue which requires, alas! discretion for its practice.

The Need for the Schools.

The want of social earnestness, the hesitation between preaching and practice, nay, the dominant note of hesitation in the preaching itself, which is seldom assured except when it is ignorant, constitute a condition that forbids real progress and goes far to explain the failure of the Church. She may seek increased membership, but unless there be an outbreak of the prophetic gift, fired by a true vision of God's Kingdom, at once spiritual and practical, such increase can be but a deceptive guide.

The huge inert mass of blank indifference, the despair alike of the preacher and the social reformer, will not yield to any lukewarm attack.

We do not of course assert that the spiritual temper of those who fight the battle of the Church is always or alone at fault. Our picture would be unjust if it failed to include the earnest, devoted followers of Him who was great because He served. Their ceaseless labours in all spheres of life, from the toiling bishop to the labouring preacher who weekly trudges the long country roads, from the wealthy aristocrat to the humble clerk who helps to "run a club," these must be counted for righteousness. And, doubtless, what is good leavens in its measure the whole lump. Indifference is hard as granite to overcome, but it is being subjected constantly to the elemental play of that Love which some day must break it down. Still it remains true that if Love is to triumph its practical force must be enormously increased, and to this end let us have more faith in Love.

For reasons which we have partially discussed, both earnest and indifferent are repelled from the Church or remain unattached. But even indifference may be more in the seeming, and we seldom trust the power of Love enough, whether in our private or international affairs. Let us make an effort to bridge the gulf which the past sins of the Church, no less than the present sins of a worldly generation, have fixed.

There are difficulties. The pulpit is too high above the pew, the congregation too snugly ensconced within its well-choired, well-organed nest; the world outside doubts the quality of congregational felicity, and, in any case, is in no mood for experiment. And yet the great world has its needs; it suffers, it struggles in its own way, fails and struggles again. Even the worldling has a soul, and with no help from "organised Christianity" he rises above himself at times. Leave the sacred precincts of your Tabernacle where the way is barred to the ungodly by the notice, unknown to you and yet erected by you, that trespassers will be prosecuted! Meet him on his own ground. Not only the artizan but the aristocrat. It is a want of imagination that confines the Adult School to a particular class. Discuss the deeper side of life with him at round table conferences,—no priest, no parson, no holy order, simply human beings, laymen all; or, as Friends say, Priests all in the sight of God.

There will be no want of directness, and no parasitism in such a method. Mind is brought close to mind. It is the method of Socrates and the message of Christ, a rare combination. Sermons tend to be

soporific, discussion provokes thought in the mental clash. But more than that, the ordinary congregational worship lacks too often the vital social cement. We gravely doubt whether in public worship, the right mean of practice has yet been discovered. The family feeling so essential is seldom experienced. The sense of fellowship is generally weak, and where it exists, is as we have seen, too often exclusive.

The Adult School idea has its basis in the promotion of a vivid sense of human fellowship, rooted in an all-embracing Divine Love. The small gatherings are or should be in the family spirit; their intensely human character, their simplicity, their freedom from conventional restraint tend to keep them close to the difficult problems of life. These are too often left in the church porch, but in the Adult School they are, so to speak, laid on the table.

Surely our questions are answered! If we grasp the idea aright we can see before us a vista of possibilities, far-reaching in their scope and rich in dower of blessing.

The Adult Schools may be but the bridge to a different form of church fellowship, but at least they are a bridge. Nor do we believe that their service will be temporary. In some future church order, in that wider brotherhood which in the far-off years shall fuse the sects, embracing them as one in living bonds, there will yet be a place for the "round table," for the sweet discourse of kindred souls breaking in common the spiritual Bread of Life.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE 1870.

"We shall not be far wrong in describing them [Adult Schools] as co-operative religious societies, carried on and controlled by their own members."—*Aims and Methods of Adult Schools*, issued by the National Council of Adult School Associations.

"An Adult School is expressly intended for the making of men."—*Dr. Fairbairn, Birmingham Town Hall, 1893.*

THE Adult School is an institution still in the making ; but already it represents, perhaps, the most direct and least conventional appeal which has been made to the religious consciousness of a large class of our population by any organised body of Christians in the last fifty years. A careful study of its evolution should therefore throw light upon this consciousness, and upon its changing character. It should also give some idea of the way in which this consciousness may be stimulated, and there can hardly be any problem, for the various churches or for the Church universal, more urgent than that of the religious indifference of the people. Such being the importance of our subject, it is to be regretted that no competent history of the movement has yet been written. In the following pages we venture to offer a first sketch of such a history.

That learners of mature years should gather into groups, especially for the study of those solemn and difficult matters which are least suited to the mind of childhood and the experience of early youth, is consonant with human nature and observable in every age. If, then, we seek the original of our Adult School we shall lose ourselves among the obscurest records of the past. Doubtless in the days of Socrates this institution was already ancient, and derived from the circle of young men who sat about the feet of the first forerunner of Buddha or Confucius. And since those days, men and women have entered into the quietude of convent and monastery, as much for the mutual discourse and instruction as for the other advantages offered there. But the religious needs of the last century and of our

own people, have produced Adult Schools of a peculiar form. With the growth of great towns the failure of the churches to meet the needs of the age became more and more evident ; a multitude of people remained unreached by culture, and outside the compass of any religious fellowship. The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge was entirely outstripped by the vast mass of Christian ignorance which grew up around it. As this unorganised mass increased, it came to be recognised as vaguely human ; and in this condition it aroused the alarm and the compassion of society. Some beginning was made in the enlightenment of the younger portion of this human darkness by such men as Robert Raikes, Andrew Bell, and Joseph Lancaster, in the later years of the eighteenth century. But for adults, little fresh seems to have been then attempted in this direction, beyond such agencies as the Methodist class meetings. }

Early Adult Schools.

In 1798, however, an Adult Sunday School for Bible reading and instruction in the secular arts of writing and arithmetic was opened in a room belonging to the Methodist New Connection in Nottingham, by William Singleton, himself a Methodist. He had help from a Quaker tradesman, Samuel Fox, who afterwards became specially identified with the school. Before long it came, indeed, to be principally conducted by Mr. Fox and the employés in his grocer's shop. It was a thing understood in that old-fashioned Quakerish economy, that all the shop assistants, male and female—they were principally women—should help at the Adult School on First-day morning. To this end Samuel Fox closed his premises earlier on Saturday night, and in order that they might arrive punctually at Meeting, he provided a nine o'clock breakfast for the teachers at his own house, after they had completed their two hours of teaching. The school came in later years to be specially helpful in the training of "Sabbath school" teachers, but it was originally designed for the instruction of working women, and although a men's class was soon added, Mr. Fox appears always to have been specially interested in the success of the women's side. The first of the earlier Adult Schools, it is the only one opened before 1845 which has continued without lapse to the present time. It would therefore be of interest to know precisely what form the lessons took in the early

years. As to this we have no contemporary record, but about 1830, when the school underwent some further organisation, we gather that a teacher would open by reading a chapter from the Bible, and another chapter would be read by one of the scholars, "either his own choosing or not." "After reading, the scholars went on with their writing from copies or dictation, and then reading, mostly from the Bible, with any comments the teachers thought desirable." Another account describes the scholars reading a chapter in turn, and the teachers in each class giving a short Bible-lesson upon it. This, probably, refers to a somewhat later period. A library and savings fund were added to the school about the year 1830, under the efficient care of Louisa M. Woods ; and the more advanced scholars were further assisted by Samuel Fox, who held a special arithmetic class for them three mornings in the week, from eight till nine ; and afterwards, he paid for the fuller training of such as wished to take up teaching in the British Schools of the town as a profession.


Thus we are probably justified in believing that the Nottingham school aimed originally at teaching the young women employed in the lace and hosiery factories and warehouses of the town such secular knowledge as is now taught in elementary schools, but that the Bible was used as a text-book, while a small but gradually increasing element of conservative excess was admitted into the lessons ; that a men's class was added a few years later ; that the Schools fell into the hands of Friends, and in after years adopted various agencies of thrift and mutual improvement.

Six years later (1804) the Bible Society was founded, and an organised effort set on foot to realise George III.'s pious desire that every poor subject in his dominions might be able to read his Bible, and have a Bible to read. But for this end it was necessary to supplement the efforts of the Society. The discovery that many a poor subject could not read the Bible that was offered him, led Rev. Thomas Charles, one of the founders of the Society, to establish a school for adults as well as for children at Bala in 1811. Similar schools sprang up almost simultaneously in all parts of Wales, and were for a time in such favour, that in some districts, it is said, the entire population was enrolled. We believe that, to some extent, this continues to the present time ; the Welsh Sunday Schools including persons of all ages among their scholars.

Almost the same thing occurred in Bristol, where in the following year (1812), William Smith, a Methodist door-keeper, having also observed the inability of his poorer fellow-townsmen to read these same Bibles, obtained the assistance of a few others, and opened small Adult Schools for Bible-reading only, in the cottages of that city, both for men and women. These also, multiplying rapidly, sprang up in other parts of the country as distant as Plymouth, London, Yarmouth, and Sheffield.

In 1816 an Adult School was opened at Leeds, apparently under the care of Friends, who were interested in William Smith's work in Bristol, as may be seen by those who chance upon a quaint and somewhat rare pamphlet from the pen of a Quaker doctor in the latter city, one Thomas Pole, M.D., who in this year published *A History of the Origin and Progress of Adult Schools, with an account of the beneficial effects already produced on the moral character of the labouring poor*. At the same time and under similar circumstances an Adult School was opened in York. It was, however, short-lived. The Leeds school, also, only lasted six years. About the time it closed, Thomas Cooper, the Chartist, then aged 17, opened another for "the poor and utterly uneducated" of Leicester, but the time was not yet ripe in this the modern centre of "an Adult School England"; when Cooper went elsewhere, his school seems to have been dissolved. We hear of another school commenced by a Friend (C. Cumber) in Croydon; and Bristol Friends who had formerly lent a part of their premises for an Adult School, carried on a Women's School of their own from 1826 to 1836.

Doubtless there were others of which we have found no record, but such, as far as we know, were the schools which existed before the days of Joseph Sturge. As to those in Wales we are unable to speak, but Dr. Pole describes how the Bristol schools would meet, often in the humblest of premises, on a Sunday afternoon from two to four—surely the sleepest stretch of daylight in the workers' week!—and how the learners were admonished to be present ten minutes before the time appointed, "to allow for the variation of clocks." The teaching was purely unsectarian; indeed, Dr. Pole recommends that the Bible should be read without note or comment, or any explanation whatever; and "that no lesson should be used that contains a sentiment not approved



by every denomination of Christians." Every care was taken, he explains, "to avoid making the schoolrooms places of worship, wherein the peculiar opinions of any society of Christians may be inculcated." From such thorough-going unsectarianism did the movement spring!

The teaching of writing was much debated; except in Nottingham, we should question whether arithmetic was even discussed. To read the Bible appeared a religious *sine qua non*, but against writing not only was its secularity alleged, but imaginative persons seemed to have pictured the perils of forgery by the poor.*

We seek in vain through most of these earlier schools for that wholesome and quickening spirit of Christian equality, without which philanthropy, charity and "religious work" degenerate into forms of patronage or interference. A too condescending interest in the "labouring poor" is patent in the writing of our worthy Bristol Friend. Destitute of the democratic constitution which is essential to their modern successors, these early Adult Schools were simply undenominational Bible classes for adults. Their unsectarianism was so extreme that it seriously limited their usefulness, since it resulted in the exclusion of that necessary explanation without formulary, which even the Education Act of 1870 recognised in the Bible lessons given under the School Boards it created. These deficiencies, and the hour at which they were held may perhaps account for their lack of permanence. Such work as they attempted was probably better done by definitely sectarian agencies.

It will have been remarked that these Bible classes were open as much to women as to men, though we do not gather that, except perhaps in Wales, they were taught together in mixed classes. On the subject of equal opportunity for both sexes, Dr. Pole has some interesting and curious observations. He says, for instance:—

"In the education of children a preference seems to be generally given to boys; but in Adult Schools we have been equally desirous of cultivating the female mind;"

and adds several appropriate but perhaps too optimistic sentences from the reports of the Stockport Sunday School:

* As to arithmetic, after visiting Nottingham in 1846, the Severn Street (Birmingham) Teachers' Meeting remarked severely, "we imagine that persons who learn arithmetic on First-day will soon think it no harm to keep their accounts or even transact business on that day."

“A woman’s information influences the present comfort and future state of her family. If her house be well ordered, the husband forsakes the ale-house, and where there would have been want, there is plenty. The cottager is rich whose wife is cleanly, economical, and able to conduct the affairs of her little family with judgment. It is the mother who instructs the children ; and in general, as she is, so are they.”

It seems evident then, that such advantages as these Bible classes afforded were equally available for women, and that the importance of their education was becoming recognised. It is singular indeed that modern thinkers have not been more pre-occupied by a matter of which the wiser Greeks recognised the necessity. One only regrets that so many years, comprising the life of a least one generation, had to elapse before the real needs of the people were understood, and the work thus tentatively commenced became established on a sound basis of permanence.

Meanwhile the Society of Friends was being prepared to enter upon this department of religious service. After their first forty years of fervid evangelical activity, of persecution, and of imprisonment, had come a period in which Friends settled down into quietness and comparative isolation from this troublesome world. But a certain number of them were drawn into useful public service by the humanitarian movement of the later eighteenth century. Gradually Quakerism came out of hiding ; it became a pioneer in various forms of education and in many kinds of philanthropy ; for a while it was delayed on the battle fields of theology ; but the voice of duty called it forth at last to other fields, white already unto harvest. All through the nineteenth century that voice has been awakening the Society of Friends out of a complacent and spurious quietism in which it was in danger of sinking and of becoming lost, and raising it above pedantic fears of “creaturely activity” to an overmastering realisation of the service of love, which is the birthright of all who enter upon the higher life. Thus about the middle of the century, Friends were becoming readier to respond to the claims of necessitous souls.

Severn Street School.

In 1842, Joseph Sturge, a man of wide and profound sympathies, visited Nottingham on an electoral errand, and became interested in that pioneer Adult School. For three years the matter dwelt in his mind, and then he called some of his younger friends together—he was himself

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Joseph Sturge

in middle-age, and deeply immersed in affairs—and told them how he had grieved to see “unwashed laziness lounging in narrow streets, troops of boys making mischief with trees, hedgerows and fences, or playing at ‘pitch and hustle’ in the outskirts ;” he laid before them the beneficent success of the Nottingham school, and asked if they would be willing to begin the same work in Birmingham. The thing being agreed upon, a class for lads over fourteen commenced in October of that year in the British School in Severn Street, from six to eight on Sunday evenings. The attendance declined so seriously in the following April, when the outdoor attractions of spring evenings proved too strong for the lads, that it was wisely and promptly decided to transfer the class to the early morning (7.30). Then it was that the teachers were first disconcerted by the appearance of full-grown men, who also wished to learn. Although accepted, these were at first labelled “outlaws,” and for six years no separate accommodation seems to have been provided for them. It was not till October, 1852, that the Adult School proper became separated from the junior section.* The order of procedure in the classes was originally as follows :—“The first hour was devoted to writing ; one of the scholars and a teacher then read a chapter aloud, and the remainder of the time was devoted to Scripture reading, spelling and questioning by the teacher.”† It seems hardly necessary to observe that at Severn Street as at the earlier schools, the object was at first much more purely “educational,” in the narrow sense, than it has since become. Faith in the moral results of simple elementary education was at that time more widely spread than at the present ; and this probably explains the willingness of teachers to use the Bible, or portions of it, as a reading book, without seriously attempting to explain its many obscurities.

The history of Severn Street School and its sister establishment for women in Ann Street (afterwards removed to the Priory) is full of suggestion, and in many respects, represents the evolution of the movement as a whole. Its connection with William White, to whose position

* Lads of 14 years and upwards.

† Minute of Teachers’ Meeting, 1847, quoted in W. White’s *Story of Severn Street*, p. 80. A reward ticket, valued at a halfpenny, was at first given every Sunday for punctual attendance, and prizes were purchased with these tickets at the year-end. This is probably the original of the Early Attendance Fund, which in various amended forms is so popular an institution in many schools.

in the movement we shall presently refer, is also most interesting. Class I. was formed in the year that he came to Birmingham, and he was its teacher from that year until his death. The management of the Severn Street School was vested till last year in the Teachers' Meeting, which from the beginning assembled regularly* for mutual counsel, social intercourse, and actual business.

In 1850, a joint quarterly meeting of men's and women's teachers was held, and continued for many years; twenty years later an annual meeting was set up, at which these met with the elementary or scholar-teachers and the class officers (secretaries, librarians, etc.). A district conference of teachers and officers was also held in 1883. But till last year, when the Severn Street Adult School Council was formed upon a partially representative basis, the federating body of the schools has been the self-appointed Teachers' Meeting. Although apparently autocratic in constitution, this meeting has always encouraged the classes and branches in the practice of self-government; and, while possessing a theoretical right of veto, has avoided interference in matters of internal management. In the last resort, the Teachers' Meeting could only refuse the use of the title "Severn Street School" to a refractory class or branch.

A Savings Fund and a tea party were the first of many social auxiliaries; these were followed by a Women's School, which promptly established a Savings Fund of its own. Libraries, Temperance Societies, and week-night classes, grew up one after another. Class I. inaugurated an "annual trip," a monthly meeting for its own business, and a "Sick Society."

Twenty years after the opening of the schools, when their total membership exceeded a thousand, a Sunday evening meeting for worship was established. Then, with continually increasing numbers, classes began to migrate to other parts of the town, and presently to plant colonies and form branches in outlying districts, where a nucleus of scholars had gone to reside. But this was a full generation after the school was founded.

A quarter of a century after its foundation and when its total membership approached two thousand, other religious bodies awakened to the value of this work, and began an organised effort to found other schools.

* Monthly at first, but now bi-monthly for many years.

Thirteen years later an inter-denominational association federated the various schools throughout the Midlands.

The last twelve years have been marked by the further decentralisation of the work, and by the founding of social clubs in various centres. With the death of William White, whose life in Birmingham had practically synchronised with that of the schools, the local movement has been, as it were, reconsecrated and filled anew with his spirit of helpful service.*

* The movement in and around Birmingham is more fully set forth in the following :—

Chronological Record of the Growth of Severn Street and the Priory Adult Schools, principally compiled from Wm. White's history (1895).

- 1845. Adult School for men, founded by Joseph Sturge, in Severn Street. Teachers' (Monthly) Meeting first held at Joseph Sturge's house.
- 1846. Becomes an Early Morning School.
- 1847. Conference for formation of Friends' First-Day School Association. Savings Fund commenced. First tea party.
- 1848. Women's School at Ann Street; Mary Ann King, Superintendent. Wm. White comes to Birmingham. Class I. (Wm. White's class) formed.
- 1849. Women's Savings Fund opened.
- 1850. Joint (Men's and Women's) Teachers' Meetings commenced. 382 M., 145 W., on register.
- 1851. Library started. Temperance meetings held. Night School twice a week.
- 1852. Men's School separated from Juniors. Special reading book introduced, *The Adult's Help to Learn to Read*. Women's Monday Evening School.
- 1854. Annual trip of Class I. commenced. Women's Temperance Society.
- 1855. Monthly (business) Meeting of Class I. first held. "Elementary" Teachers introduced about this time. 422 M., 224 W., on register.
- 1857. Women's Sewing School.
- 1858. Sick Society (Class I.)
- 1859. Death of Joseph Sturge.
- 1860. 654 M., 300 W.
- 1861. Women's School moves to Upper Priory
- 1865. 789 M., 318 W. Sunday evening Meeting for Worship at Severn Street.
- 1866. Death of Joseph Clark, first Superintendent.
- 1867. Conference of Teachers, F.F.D.S.A. at Birmingham.
- 1869. Class IX. migrates to Suffolk Street.
- 1870. 1,505 M., 396 W.
- 1871. *Inter-denominational Committee formed to extend Adult Schools in Birmingham.* Women's exhibition of needlework, etc., etc.
- 1874. Formation of *Severn Street Christian Society*.
- 1875. 1,738 M., 535 W.

William White.

We have referred, in passing, to William White's part in the movement. Brought up among the Wesleyans in Reading, he had been a successful Sunday School teacher from very early years. He entered business in Birmingham in 1848 as a bookseller and printer, and thenceforward devoted much of his leisure to the Severn Street School, where he was from the first specially drawn toward the elder scholars. In 1849 he read a paper at the Manchester Conference of Friends' First-day School teachers, urging that while other religious bodies were now earnestly engaged in Sunday School work among children, Friends were by their genius specially qualified to help adults, and that this field lay vacant before them. Adult Schools, he pointed out, offered many advantages; easy to found, they should be self-supporting, and were besides practically beyond the reach of clerical interference.

By this time, as we have seen, the first wave of enthusiasm for adult Bible classes had quite spent its energy. The various churches had con-

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- 1877. Classes IX., XIV., and XVII. migrate to Bristol Street. A Meeting for Worship established at Bristol Street. Soho division Adult School commenced.
 - 1878. Class XV. at Sparkbrook.
 - 1880. 2,397 M., 684 W.
 - 1881. Branch of Class V. at Bournville.
 - 1883. District Conference of Teachers and Class Officers at Birmingham. Class I., branch at Staniforth Street.
 - 1884. *Midland Adult Sunday School Association founded* (Wm. White, President).
 - 1885. 3,082 M., 798 W.
 - 1890. Teachers' Conference, F.F.D.S.A. at Birmingham. Girls' Club at the Priory. Savings Fund, £17,000. 3,280 M., 718 W.
 - 1891. Severn Street Junior Camp.
 - 1892. Oxford University Extension Lectures, Severn Street centre formed.
 - 1893. Class I. opens a Social Club.
 - 1893-1900 Extension lectures by Hudson Shaw and others.
 - 1894. Friends' Hall, Farm Street, built, and Club opened.
 - 1895. Bristol Street Social Club. Jubilee of the Severn Street School. 3,396 M., 968 W.
 - 1897. Severn Street Social Club.
 - 1899. Moseley Road Institute opened.
 - 1900. Death of Wm. White. 4,618 M., 1,285 W., 59 J.
 - 1901. Formation of Severn Street Adult School Council.
 - Rea Street branch opened at "*The Coppersmiths' Arms*."

centrated their forces upon that Sunday School work for children which the lack of elementary education made the more urgent. Although Joseph Sturge, with a few others, had observed that this work left the youths still unreached, and had begun to urge the claims of these upon the public, even the religious body to which he belonged was slow in recognising the importance of this matter, and for many years the few Adult Schools struggled on under discouragement and scarcity of teachers. At first Friends, like other religious bodies, were most attracted to the juvenile Sunday Schools, and when Joseph Sturge invited Quaker teachers from all parts of England to meet at Birmingham in 1847, it was the juvenile work which was uppermost in their minds—indeed the senior schools were then but barely established in two or three centres. This conference instituted the Friends' First-day School Association, and appointed as its executive committee certain Bristol Friends who were at that time almost exclusively interested in the Children's Schools.

It fell then to William White rather than to Joseph Sturge, whose time was already fully occupied in other public service, or to the Committee of the new Association closely occupied for the next twenty years in the extension of the schools for children—it fell then to William White to become the agent of the Adult School Movement. And forthwith he never tired of urging upon Friends in every part of the country the importance of the cause for which he laboured at home. When his work commenced in Birmingham there were very few adult scholars at Severn Street, and probably fewer still sprinkled through the classes at Middlesborough and at York, while even at Nottingham the number was never considerable. It is safe to say that when he began his work in Birmingham the total number of men and women in Adult Schools throughout the country was well under five hundred, probably it was not half that figure; and now, hardly two years after the close of his long ministry, it is estimated that the members of the various Adult Schools in this country number fifty thousand. That surely, is a wonderful result of his labours. And while in so democratic a body as the Society of Friends, and in a movement such as the Adult School Movement, we may perhaps not care to speak much of leadership—rather recognising the co-operative effort of many members inspired and moved by the one Spirit—yet we do

well to recognise that these fifty thousand men and women are in a true sense linked together by the life and labour of William White. Without him, it may be doubted whether the movement would ever have attained breadth and continuity, would ever have become separated from the general Sunday School work throughout the country ; or on the other hand, have been kept distinct from the Pleasant Sunday Afternoons which for a while aroused so much enthusiasm. For while hundreds of other men and women have worked faithfully in these schools, there is probably none with at all an equal gift for this particular work who has been so entirely identified with it.

Early years of the F.F.D.S.A.

The Friends' First-day School Association, founded as we have seen in Birmingham in 1847, still links together the various Adult and other Sunday Schools conducted by members of the Society of Friends.* For the last thirty years it has been recognised by the Friends' Yearly Meeting, and since 1893 has annually reported to that body. It may therefore be regarded as a part, although an independent part, of the official machinery of Quakerism. For the first quarter of a century its conferences were principally occupied with questions concerning Children's Schools, including such matters as the use or disuse of corporal punishment and the teaching and singing of hymns ; and until after the passing of the Education Act of 1870, the figures for adults and children were not even separated in its statistical statements, and not until 1873 did the adult section of the work become numerically the more important. At the present time the schools of the Association† contain about 20,000 child-

* The objects of the Association were originally (1847) described as : " 1st, to diffuse information generally on the subject of First-day Schools ; 2nd, to establish regular intercourse amongst them, whether by correspondence, mutual conference, or other means ; 3rd, to increase the efficiency of Schools already in existence ; and, 4th, to encourage, and assist in, the formation of new Schools." It consisted " of the officers and teachers of First-day Schools, under the management of Friends in Great Britain and Ireland, and subscribers of not less than 2s. 6d. per annum to the funds of the Association." The central Committee consisted of a Treasurer, Secretary, and five other members, and two " correspondents " from each affiliated School. While the objects remain practically the same, the constitution of the Association was considerably altered in 1893.

† Description of Friends' First-day Schools eligible for inclusion in the Association :—

- 1st. Bible Class, taught by a Friend,
- 2nd. Friends' Adult or Children's School at ———,
- 3rd. Adult or Children's School on premises belonging to Friends, or under the control of Friends, but taking its name from the locality.

ren, 20,000 men, 8,000 women, and 2,000 juniors, *i.e.*, youths from fourteen or fifteen years of age, who are usually included in the adult section. The eight thousand women remind us of Dr. Pole's dictum ; and it is interesting to learn that in Leicestershire, outside the Association itself, and where the movement has recently made so extraordinary an advance, Women's Schools are being demanded in almost every centre where Men's Schools are established.

The date of several Adult Schools begun about this time is rendered obscure by the manner in which they developed. In towns and villages where Quaker Children's Sunday Schools were established, the older boys and girls would often form senior classes, which became the nuclei of Adult Schools when these began to arouse interest in the minds of Friends. Thus there are Adult Schools which can hardly be said to have had any precise date of origin ; it was only as the grown-up scholars became numerous that the class severed itself from the children's school and was held on other premises. Such was the case in York, Bristol, and elsewhere ; while the old village Sunday School at Lothersdale (1800), long under the care of Friends, seems never to have witnessed the separation.

But a separate Adult School had already been formed in Sheffield, when in 1856 the Association sent out its first deputation to visit the meetings of Friends, and endeavour to stimulate a wider interest in the work. Social meetings were held with the young people who seemed the most likely to become teachers, the general and local position was discussed, and they were encouraged either to commence, or to go forward in the work. William White was a member of this and of subsequent deputations, going first to the Quaker centres in Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham, and afterwards to Lancashire and London ; doubtless it was largely due to his efforts that the number of Adult Schools now began to increase more rapidly. Among the more notable were Huddersfield (1856), Bristol and York (1857, now first separated from the Children's Schools), Leeds and Dewsbury (1859), Hitchin (1860),

Affiliation to be granted to Schools by the General Committee, if in their opinion they can be classed under either of the above three heads, and provided that the reverent study of the Scriptures is the leading feature in the School.

By a decision of the Annual Meeting of 1899, the General Committee may in its discretion, place upon its list, Schools which are carried on substantially upon the same lines as those held on First-days, but which are held on other days of the week.

Plymouth and Leicester (1861), and Luton (1862). By this time some thirty Adult Schools were scattered among the meetings of Friends.

The movement also began to attract attention outside the limits of the Society. As early as 1859 some Bristol Friends had attended a general Sunday School Conference held in Bristol, and introduced the subject of Adult Schools. At West Bromwich, John Blackham, a Congregationalist, opened the school connected with Ebenezer Chapel ; but it was not till 1871 that an inter-denominational committee was formed to bring the work more closely under the notice of the several churches in Birmingham. Meanwhile other schools had been opened by Friends, such as those at Scarborough, "in a room of an old sail-loft" (1866), Darlington and Colchester (1867), Norwich and York Road, Leeds (1869), and Hull (1870)—while the number of scholars in the forty schools now (1870) numbered about 7,000.

Scholars' Meetings for Worship, etc.

Meanwhile, with this steady growth, internal developments had been taking place in the movement. At its centre in Birmingham, meetings for worship for the scholars and their families had begun to be held once a month ; and this custom was also adopted at Leeds (1865),* and shortly afterwards in various other centres. These meetings were generally conducted somewhat "after the manner of Friends"—that is to say upon a basis of silence and with but little pre-arrangement. They were usually opened by the reading of a passage from the Bible, followed by an address given by some member of the Society of Friends ; others of those present would take part as they felt able, and generally one or more hymns would be sung.

In 1874, on the suggestion of Robert W. Douglas, an American Friend, "travelling in the ministry" in this country, a sort of extra-denominational church was formed at Severn Street under the title of the Severn Street Christian Society, in which a considerable number of adult scholars and their wives took up membership.† In 1882 about a thousand

* Two "First-day morning meetings" for scholars are reported from Leeds in 1872. These were ordinary Quaker meetings.

† RULES OF THE SEVERN STREET CHRISTIAN SOCIETY.

1.—The object of this Society is to unite closer together in Christian fellowship those who attend the

persons were attending the eight meetings of this description in the city of Birmingham. About 1875 or 1876, a similar Friends' Christian Union was formed in Leeds, while monthly meetings for worship were reported as being held in connection with the schools at Ipswich and Middlesbrough.

Thus it would appear that in spite of the desire to keep the school itself entirely free from sectarian bias, the need for some simple form of worship and opportunity for devotional meeting together such as would fulfil the requirements, both mental and spiritual, of such of the scholars as attended no other place of worship, was early felt and recognised. Many of the men would still be shy of churches and chapels ; their paid ministry, with its somewhat indirect and rhetorical sermons, their more or less elaborate ritual and order of service, and perhaps the respect of persons shown by some of their officers, were stumbling blocks in the way of thoughtful working-men. This may in part have resulted from natural if not altogether defensible prejudices ; but there was besides another and a positive attraction to the very premises and *personnel* of the Adult School ;

First-day evening meetings held in connection with Severn Street First-day Schools, on the simple Scriptural basis of "Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

2.—This fellowship will lead those who enter into it to assemble together for the worship of God, and for mutual instruction and edification, under the headship of our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, relying on His promise to be present in our meetings—"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them ;" and who, in speaking of Divine worship, said, "God is a Spirit ; and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth."

3.—Those who feel the love of God in their hearts will desire to meet diligently and regularly for *Public* worship. Our worship of Him will not stop at this, nor be confined to set times or places only ; every day we shall feel the need of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and be enabled in "everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving," to "let our requests be known unto God."

4.—We shall also be led to a diligent reading of the Holy Scriptures, with prayerful desires that their blessed truths may profit us under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, so that we may "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," be fitted to glorify Him in this life, and be enabled to look forward, with faith in His promises, to the life everlasting.

5.—Obedience to the precepts of Scripture will lead us to honesty, sobriety, truthfulness, and frugality ; it will help us to avoid all that is evil, and to do all the good we can ; proving to those around us that we are living the Christian life, and fulfilling the Saviour's own words : "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples if ye have love one to another ;" and, again, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

These are the rules and precepts by which the members of the Christian Society at Severn Street desire to live, and we are ready to offer the right hand of fellowship to all others who can unite with us on this foundation.

N.B.—In accordance with Rule 2, it is understood that in all our meetings there is full liberty for the exercise of the spiritual gifts of our members, the definite arrangements being confined to the reading of the Bible by the Friends appointed for that purpose, and the giving out of hymns.

it was there, and under the instrumentality of the men and women who laboured there, that the uplifting experience and enlightenment of the new life had entered their hearts, and thenceforward they could not but regard the Adult School as in some sense their spiritual home, and the centre of their higher life. It was to this place, then, that some at least of the scholars were anxious to bring their families ; and it was these reasons which led to the establishment of special meetings known under various names as Mission, or Christian Fellowship Meetings in many of the larger centres.

Though chronologically somewhat out of place, it may be interesting to observe here the lines along which the meetings of the Birmingham Christian Society have developed. Beginning very simply and quietly, it was not long before the desire for some "livelier" form of service was expressed. The demand was largely based upon the spiritual needs of the worshippers, many of these being drawn from among the poor outside the Adult Schools. For these men and women the liberty of utterance, and the periods of silence which belonged to the earlier meetings, did not seem to be appropriate. There ensued a time of transition when attempts were made to combine the Quaker freedom from pre-arrangement with the requirements of an evangelistic service. These attempts do not appear to have been successful ; and at the present time the two ideals of a "meeting for worship" are represented by two distinct classes of meeting. Morning meetings held "after the manner of Friends" have recently been established in several Adult School centres, and these are principally attended by some of the more thoughtful scholars and their families. The evening services of the Christian Society have become "Mission" Meetings, and attract a larger and more general audience. The demand for meetings of both these classes has come from members of the Adult Schools, and we may therefore regard each of them as satisfying, in some measure, a distinct religious need of our time.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER 1870.

"An Adult School is a society of men or women (over seventeen or eighteen years of age) formed for the purpose of mutual helpfulness.

"The basis of an Adult School is the practical teaching of Jesus Christ. It does not concern itself with the spreading of special theories, but aims at helping the members in their actual lives. . . .

"The free, but reverent and practical study of the Bible conducted in common with full opportunity for discussion, is deemed the centre of the School work. . . .

"Each School is governed as much as possible by the members themselves. . . .

"The only qualification for membership is a wish to join the School. The members of a School may belong to any denomination, or to none."

"Adult Schools, their Aims and Methods," etc., issued by the National Council, 1902.

THE Adult School Movement had reached a membership of about 8,000, when it experienced a check in the year 1871: a check, that is to say, in the section under Quaker control; of the movement as a whole, it is difficult to speak, for already a considerable number of non-Quaker Schools were being built up, of whose growth we have no statistical record. But as to this Quaker section, we may observe that the attention of Friends was freshly occupied with their new Foreign Mission Association, and for a time this may perhaps have arrested the supply of Adult School teachers. In 1872 a small measure of recognition was vouchsafed by the central Quaker organisation, the Friends' First-day School Association being instructed to report the holding of its Annual Meeting* to Yearly Meeting. But the interest of Friends was not fully re-awakened

* Held for many years at Ackworth School, near Pontefract, where Friends were accustomed to gather in June for the General (Annual) Meeting of the school.

till the year 1874, when an influential conference of Adult School teachers was held in Darlington, and opened by Henry Pease. From the date of this conference till the year 1886 there was a rapid advance in the membership of Quaker Schools.

In 1875, an interesting off-shoot of the Adult School Movement was planted in the Midlands, where John Blackham,—an active Congregationalist who had already founded the Adult School at West Bromwich, and was afterwards one of the founders of the Midland Adult Sunday School Association,—inaugurated Pleasant Sunday Afternoons. These were at first regarded as a branch of Adult School work, the other schools being spoken of as “Early Morning Schools,” by way of distinction. But in time it was observed that the former lacked the intimate personal relation between the members, and the mutual interchange of thought which marks the Adult School proper.* That this is in every case attained in the latter we would not claim, for there are so-called Adult Schools on the list of the Association which might more properly be described as P.S.A.’s. On into the ’90’s, *One and All*, the organ of the Adult School Movement, published P.S.A. reports; in 1892, there was even some discussion as to the desirability of altering the name of the Midland Adult Sunday School Association into the Midland Adult School and P.S.A. Association, so intimately were the two movements believed to be related. It was not until 1898 that a separate journal, the *P.S.A. Leader*, was published.

Various Adult School Institutions.

Adult Schools have always fostered practical morality, and encouraged social usefulness. It is therefore interesting to observe the growth of some characteristic Adult School institutions.

(a) *Savings Funds.* By 1876 the scholars in the Quaker Schools exceeded 10,000, and some interesting social experiments had been made. Among the earliest of these were the Savings Funds, which were opened shortly after the founding of several of the schools. Before the days of savings bank facilities these occupied an exceedingly useful place, and even in 1894 the accumulated savings in the schools of the Association reached

* Another weakness in the P.S.A. Movement is its approach to a Sunday afternoon entertainment and the consequent absence of real substance in the teaching.

a total of over £63,000. About this time, however, the funds of the York School were returned to the depositors, who were encouraged to avail themselves instead of the Post Office Savings Bank. A similar course was adopted in Bradford, where the teachers became agents for the Yorkshire Penny Bank ; and in 1893 a Friends' Schools Savings Trust, Limited, was formed in Birmingham, for the safe investment of money deposited by members of Friends' Adult Schools. The Severn Street and Priory Savings Funds have been invested in the care of this Trust, to the amount of £14,000. These changes were necessitated by the considerable financial responsibility of the larger Savings Funds, and the increasing labour of their efficient working. But even after the withdrawal of several large School funds (representing in 1887 nearly 55 per cent of the total), there remains (1901) £45,000 in the Savings Funds of the Association. Sick and Benevolent Funds were also early established in many schools ; and in the Leicestershire Union, which consists almost exclusively of non-Quaker schools, fifty-two schools (out of fifty-nine men's and seventeen women's), have Savings Funds, thirty-seven have sick clubs and thirty-three benevolent clubs.

(b) *Coffee Carts, etc.* In 1871, the York Adult School took up an interesting branch of practical Temperance work. At the suggestion of the late H. I. Rowntree and under his supervision, Coffee Carts were started by members of the Adult School Temperance Society ; these have done valuable work for thirty years and have been a profitable enterprise to the Society, enabling it to sustain weekly Saturday night meetings over this long period ; but it seems a little unfortunate that the general school funds have not directly benefited by it. A Coffee Cart Company was also started in Scarborough in 1875, and others in Sheffield, Hull and Norwich shortly afterwards. In 1877 we read that the Sheffield company sold half a million cups of coffee at a handsome profit.

Other social experiments in the seventies include the building of twenty-five houses, through the agency of a building society, for Newcastle scholars ;* the opening of a reading-room in Manchester for the senior boys, two nights a week ; and the holding of industrial exhibitions at Sunderland and Leominster.

* Of the twenty-five scholars who originally joined, only seven seem to have completed their purchase.

Scholars' Work.

(a) *In the Classes.* These instances suggest a few of the many opportunities for social intercourse, which gradually grew up in the earlier years,—opportunities also for self-help and for mutual service to the members. But these still lagged far behind the aspirations of many workers. It was not enough to encourage thrift by Savings Funds, habits of regularity and punctuality as well as thrift by Early Attendance Funds, and co-operation in thrift by Sick and Benevolent Funds; neither was it sufficient to set coffee carts by the gates of large factories at breakfast and dinner-hours. Two problems continually pressed for solution: how best to employ the scholars in useful social service, and how to provide them and their sons with suitable places of weeknight recreation.

The first question was partially answered by an increased employment of scholars in the work of the schools, as secretaries, librarians, committeemen on multitudinous committees; as members of deputations to other schools;* as visitors of absentees,† or of those scholars who were ill. At Nottingham the scholars had some voice in the selection of the lessons (not always confined to "Scripture") as early as 1863; while in 1876 an important conference of Yorkshire teachers and scholars was held in Sheffield, when the visiting of scholars, the holding of monthly class meetings for business, and the closer federation of Adult Schools, were among the subjects discussed. Again, scholars were taking part in some of the teaching itself, although until recently this only took the form of superintending the reading or writing classes. In 1877 Birmingham was employing nearly one hundred of these "elementary" or scholar-teachers. In 1883 they found a new field of service in the children's schools, which they now began to teach in that city, Severn Street thus becoming, like the old Nottingham School, a training place for Sunday School teachers.

(b) *Institutes.* But the second question still remained unsolved, and it has only been in quite recent years that Clubs and Institutes have been opened in several Adult School centres under the management of Committees of Scholars. Yet the need for such clubs was plainly recognised from early times. Thus in 1875 the report of the F.F.D.S.A. declares

* In 1865 one hundred Birmingham scholars visited the Bristol Schools.

† Leicester School Report, 1869.

"We cannot treat a Sabbath scholar as mind and spirit only, and forget the physical powers, the social instincts, the love of recreation and change, which are also part of his constitution, and which, if not converted into auxiliaries to our work will assuredly turn their arms against us." And it adds, truly, if somewhat cautiously, "perhaps the consecration to the highest uses even of our recreations, may be considered as a part of the work of the church not yet fully accomplished." These sentiments had again been anticipated by William White at the Conference of 1863, when he said, "I would have our schools, as far as may be practicable, made available for the senior classes during the week—'free and easies' without the drink or the vulgarity of the tavern"; and he proceeded to recommend games, readings, sick funds, libraries, etc.

For a long time these excellent suggestions were very partially accepted. Up till 1890 the social activities of the Schools hardly extended beyond the formation of those savings and benevolent funds which we have noted, of libraries and magazine clubs, with occasional week-night lectures, popular concerts (when the Quaker hostility to instrumental music had sufficiently broken down), and socials or tea-meetings. If we take the Birmingham record, we find that in 1890 a girls' club was opened at the Priory, a "country camp" for Juniors from Severn Street was established in the summer of '91, while William White's class started a club in '93, just thirty years after the address of its teacher which we have quoted. The expenses incurred by it were, however, too heavy, and it did not long survive. It was more successfully succeeded by others in Farm Street and Bristol Street in the two following years, by the Severn Street Club in 1897, and subsequently by those at Selly Oak, Northfield, and Bournville. By this time Social Clubs had been opened in other centres, such as Sheffield, York, and Luton. The clubs of the Sheffield group date from 1895, when a Reading and Recreation Club was founded on the Adult School premises at Hartshead, in commemoration of the Jubilee of the local Friends' Children's Schools. These rooms are open nine months in the year (September 1st to May 30th), at a charge of sixpence a quarter, or one shilling for the whole season. The games include billiards, bagatelle, cards, chess, and draughts. The club is managed by an annual meeting of the subscribers, and a committee elected by it. The Adult School

authorities retain a right of veto on its proceedings, which, however, they have not had occasion to employ. Similar clubs, but on a somewhat smaller scale, are connected with other Sheffield schools ; and will also be found in such centres as Westminster, Huddersfield, York, Leicester,* Lancaster, and Leeds, although the games admitted do not always include billiards or cards.

A more detailed description of a village institute connected with a northern Adult School may not be out of place here. It stands in the midst of a population of about two or three thousand, and was completed at the beginning of 1900, although some of the rooms had already been in use for three or four years. It now consists of a large hall capable of seating 400 persons, with a platform suitable for concerts and entertainments, a billiard-room with two full-size tables ; a reading-room, well supplied with papers and a good library, a small games room, for ping-pong, etc. ; a bath-room with two gas-heated baths ; and a women's room with a piano, used for the smaller meetings. The caretaker sells aerated waters and tobacco to the institute members. These number about a hundred from eighteen years of age upward. The subscription is five shillings to men over twenty-one, four shillings to the younger members. During the winter months socials are held about once a fortnight for members and their friends ; these attract many young people, and are under the supervision of the Vice-Presidents, who are teachers in the Adult School, and other members of the School and Institute Committees, some of these being women. The Institute is governed by a committee of eleven of its own members ;† but all its decisions come up for authorisation to the General Council, which is composed of the School and Institute Committees sitting together under the chairmanship of the Vice-President. The President of the School has also a right of veto on their proceedings. Cards are not allowed ; and the large hall, which may be let for respectable entertainments, is only open after twelve o'clock by special permission of the President. The members of the institute pay a rent of four per cent. on the cost of building the billiard, reading, and games rooms, and

* The Leicester Club is closed on Thursday nights for Committee meetings.

† About fifty per cent. of these latter are not members of the Adult School.

have purchased the furniture and put in the baths. The net annual expenses amount to about £160. The members are practically all working-men

The number of young people who attend the socials of this Institute is probably larger than in most Adult School Clubs ; the right means of attracting this class has been carefully considered, and these socials have undoubtedly had a beneficial effect on the village life, and have widened the real influence and usefulness of the Institute. It is evident that young people of both sexes cannot find the same opportunities for wholesome social intercourse among the working-classes as among those who can boast more house-room ; and we can hardly conceive of any social work of greater importance than the provision of such opportunities during winter evenings. The direct fruit of this work must be sought in the happier home-life of the village.

In other towns such as Luton, Bristol (Barton Hill), and Hitchin, recreation and reading rooms are open several evenings in the week during the winter months ; not infrequently the rooms are required on other evenings for committees, lectures, etc. At Hitchin, the Social Centre, as it is called, has no premises of its own, but opens a single room to its members and others for three nights a week : and also acts as a purveyor of high-class public entertainments. At Moseley Road, Birmingham, a large and splendidly equipped institute, which also accommodates many branches of Adult School work, was opened in 1899, by the late Richard Cadbury. And during recent years something has been done in a humbler way to establish small clubs in old workshops or in public-houses whose licenses have lapsed (*e.g.*, the Coppersmiths' Arms in Rea Street). The last of these enterprises affords double satisfaction when the conversion of the public-house has been primarily due to that of the men who were its supporters under the old management, and have now themselves become the managers. Another interesting experiment was begun in Kingston in 1899, when some members of the Adult School there took over the Jubilee Temperance Hotel, to be used as a place of refreshment and of social recreation. At Westminster a house of ill-fame adjoining the Meeting-house recently became instead the home of an Adult School Club. In fact three clubs—for young men, for lads, and for girls—are now con-

nected with this active School. Another London School, that at Bunhill Fields, is forming a Social Club Company, Limited, shares of 10s. each being subscribed for by the scholars. A similar method of raising the requisite money has been successfully adopted in one or two of the Birmingham Institutes.

(c) *Various Agencies.* As an example of the various agencies which are found connected with an Adult School we may take the case of Luton. This is a town of about thirty-five thousand inhabitants, where people are largely engaged in home industries and have considerable control over their hours of work. The Friends' Meeting numbers 87 members (some of them resident at St. Albans and unable to share in the Luton work), and 25 other regular attenders. There is also an Adult School Society of Friends. The school, a large and flourishing one, had 868 members at the end of 1901. Among its agencies are Men's and Women's Savings Funds, a Sick Benefit Club, a Coal Club, a labour register, and a Mutual Aid Society. There is a Social Club which had 460 members last winter, and met four nights a week. There is also an athletic club, while active Mutual Improvement and Temperance Societies are at work among the members.

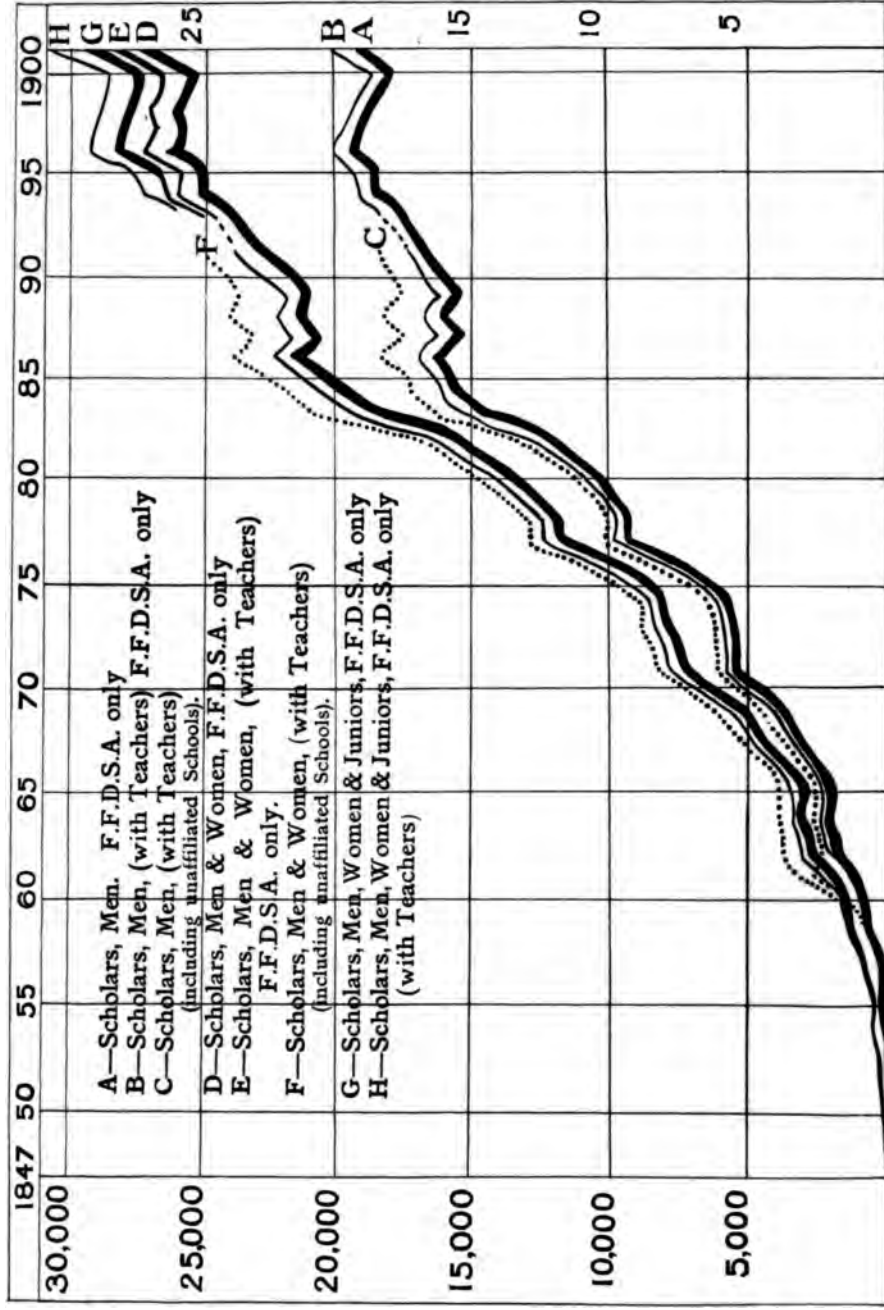
All this social side of the movement represents an effort to find suitable channels of service for the great reservoir of potential energy which is being collected in the Adult Schools, and this outlet for social service is probably best provided in those clubs which are carried on for the benefit not of the members themselves, but of the district in which the school is placed. Institutes which aim at this wider form of usefulness will almost necessarily be conducted on somewhat broader lines than those which are simply intended for the use of school members; while clubs which are simply for School members may easily tend to foster that selfish spirit of exclusion and complacency which is the enemy of missionary enthusiasm, and therefore of the School itself.

Extension and Organisation.

(a) *Statistics of Growth.* Inherent as are these varied agencies in the very conception of the Adult School, and essential as they are to its healthy development, and full realisation,—they are after all rather the limbs than the heart of the movement. This must be the Men's and Women's



CHART illustrating the History of Adult Schools under the care of Friends—1847—1901: drawn from the Records of the F.F.D.S.A.



Class,—the meetings for the mutual discussion and consideration of religion and the higher life. We may now turn again to the growth of these in membership and in organisation.

A glance at the chart will show that while there was a steady growth in Adult Schools up to the year 1886, the greatest increase took place in the preceding decade, when the number of scholars in schools affiliated with the Friends' First-day School Association more than doubled, increasing from 10,000 to 21,600. The increase shown upon the chart since that time is comparatively small, especially in the men's section (lines A and B), where the numbers appear to have been only augmented by some three thousand in fifteen years; but it must be remembered that the chart does not deal with the movement outside the schools of the Society of Friends. The outside movement has been rapidly extending, and shows an increase in the later period not incommensurate with that in the earlier. Thus if we take the total membership of all Adult Schools to stand, in 1885, at about 25,000, the last sixteen years has added another twenty thousand to that number.

In many respects 1870, the year of the Education Act, marked a new era in the history of Adult Schools. From that time other religious bodies began to give a little thought to the movement; and, at any rate, after the Darlington Conference of 1874, Friends themselves became more interested in it. We have seen that various Adult Schools were started in connection with other centres than Quaker Meeting-houses in 1870 and the succeeding years. At this time, too (between '76 and '86), there was an extraordinary growth in the Yorkshire Friends' Adult Schools, which from a membership of less than 3,500 in 1876, or about 30 per cent. of the whole, increased to hard upon 10,000 in 1886, representing nearly 45 per cent. of the total.*

Periods of arrest in the rate of progress will be observed upon the chart from 1871 to '4, in 1878, from 1884 to '9, and from 1896 to 1900. The direct causes for these delays are sometimes obscure, and we are perhaps only able to guess at the new impulse of advance. Thus in 1874,

* This number has since unhappily decreased by nearly two thousand, or, taking the men's classes alone, by more than 2,500; three of the great Yorkshire schools reaching their maximum in the years '86 to '90; Sheffield 2,866 in 1886, Hull 1,814 in 1887, and Bradford 1,707 in 1890, including teachers in each case.

a large and influential Quaker Conference met at Darlington, and from all parts of the Society considerable attention was focussed upon the work. 1878, an isolated year of arrest, was a season of bad trade followed by a severe winter. We have already referred to the growth of non-Quaker schools in the Midlands after 1884; this was perhaps one cause for the period of almost complete arrest at Severn Street, but a lack of new teachers also contributed to the same result. At this time also, as we have seen, the decline of the Yorkshire schools began. The rise from 1890 dates from another Teachers' Conference held in Birmingham in the autumn of that year; and the subsequent decline of 1896, from the death of John Dorland,* whose strong personal influence had doubtless engaged an exceptional number of young Friends in the work. But this in itself is hardly a sufficient explanation of the depression from 1896 to 1900; and we are driven to suppose that, apart from the decline in Yorkshire, with which we shall deal in the next chapter, the total of the former year approached the natural capacity of the Society of Friends in this field of service under the conditions of the Society, and with the organisation then prevailing in their schools.

Against this supposition the case of Birmingham may be quoted, showing some ninety Friends engaged in teaching Adult Schools out of a total of 733 members of the group of Birmingham meetings. This represents a proportion of one in eight, which is much higher than obtains throughout the whole society, where it appears to stand at about one in seventeen.† But the seven meetings of the Birmingham group represent a singularly compact, well-organised body of Friends, largely engaged in business and without other educational responsibilities; the membership of each meeting averages about 105, as against 48 throughout the Society in England and Wales. The disproportion therefore in the number of persons engaged in Adult School work is perhaps not so overwhelming as it would at first sight appear. It is true that the proportion of Sunday School teachers in the various Methodist bodies reaches twenty-five per cent. of the whole membership, while in the

* Secretary of the Friends' First-day School Association. The present Secretary is Frederic Taylor, without whose most kind and courteous assistance these papers could not have been written.

† Unfortunately, no return of teachers is now made; but their number may be estimated at 1,000.

Society of Friends the percentage of teachers in both the Children's and the Adult Schools hardly reaches fifteen ; but then the Quaker membership includes children, many persons "resident abroad," together with a lamentably large proportion of merely nominal members. And, what is perhaps even more relevant, since Adult School teachers are by preference young men and women, the proportion of these in the Society is decidedly below the general average : many meetings being almost destitute in this respect. An increasing tendency to employ non-Friends as responsible teachers (or Presidents) in the schools affiliated with the Association is also noticeable, owing, it is said, to a lack of Quaker teachers. This is true in Norfolk and elsewhere, and even in Birmingham, where the present extension of the Severn Street branches into new localities depends very largely upon non-Friends, who have been trained in the parent School.

Much, however, may yet be accomplished, even by the present small membership of the Society of Friends, by the better organisation of the schools, and the more general use of "elementary" teachers, or section leaders. At the Severn Street and Priory Schools there is one Quaker teacher to about sixty-five scholars ; the general average throughout the country would appear to be about one to thirty or thirty-five.

(*b*) *Organisation.* (1) *Conferences.* But now, before completing this review of the statistical progress of the movement, we must pursue our description of its internal organisation. The future historian of Adult Schools will find some difficulty in furnishing an adequate account of the rise of the purely non-sectarian movement. A fairly complete record of the Quaker schools has been kept from the beginning, and is accessible to the studious inquirer who will excavate among the mounds of old reports and magazines. But with the non-Quaker schools the case is somewhat different, and definite historical information is difficult to obtain, except from the minute books and registers of individual schools. This arises largely from the fact that until recent years the schools were isolated units, with no federating organisation. Even now, the Adult School Movement is only slowly growing out of the guarded family circle of Quakerism, to stand independently upon its own feet in the world. The record of the various Conferences of the F.F.D.S.A., notably the Report of the eighth Conference held in 1874 at Darlington, made this clear. Perhaps the most

important of its deliberations, some of which were upon Children's Sunday Schools, referred to the relation between Adult School religious services and the Society of Friends. At Birmingham in 1890, a more catholic outlook seems to have prevailed, and the subject of interest was the Adult School, *per se*. Among the papers read and the discussions which took place upon this occasion, we may enumerate the following : The Evolution of Adult School methods ; Evening Classes ; the Social Aims of Adult School Work ; the Advantages of a Week-night Adult Class ; Savings Banks in Adult Schools ; the connection between Junior and Adult Schools ; the Extent to which Adult Scholars may be employed as Teachers in Junior Schools ; Starting Adult Schools in Small Towns and Villages, etc., etc. But still the Conference was one of Quaker teachers of Friends' Adult Schools, and was held upon the premises of a Quaker Meeting ; and in the minds of many, at least of the older teachers, the Adult School Movement must still have been regarded as an adjunct of Quakerism. Bearing in mind these limitations, we need not, however, hesitate to acknowledge the service done by these conferences to the whole movement. The only reservation we must make is to remind ourselves that they did not represent the movement *as a whole*, nor did they regard it wholly for its own sake. Since the re-organisation of the F.F.D.S.A., the annual conferences have been attended by representative scholars, as well as by teachers. Many of the former are, of course, non-Friends, and their presence and participation in the meetings has considerably altered their character, giving them a much less denominational hue.

At the Birmingham Conference an important paper by J. B. Braithwaite, jun., described the *Evolution of Adult School Aims and Methods*. The writer showed how the ideal of helpfulness had been widened from that of simply teaching the scholars how to read the Bible till it covered a great number, indeed, "almost every sort of mutually helpful organisation," and these, "mainly carried on by members of the school," help to make the school "the great manufactory of workers it undoubtedly is." Actual reading and writing had come to occupy a minor and decreasing place in the schools, in fact, the very title of the presiding officer is in many places being changed from "teacher" to "president." This suggests that the "tendency of the modern Adult School is rather to develop and bring out

the capabilities of its members than merely to instruct them." Thus it fosters a wholesome spirit of universal individual responsibility ; if the President is absent, the Vice-President must preside, and the dangers of spiritual parasitism are largely obviated by co-operation and consequent *esprit de corps*. The business of the ideal school is no longer controlled by the teacher or the Teachers' Meeting ; but every member has an equal voice and vote in its affairs, "even in the annual election of the President." This statement by no means represents the actual position of Adult Schools, but was rather set forth as the ideal towards which the more progressive were tending, and which a few had attained. The final summary of the paper is so suggestive that we venture to quote it at length, believing that its main argument is justified by our own reading of the history of the movement.

"It appears to me that the evolution of the Adult School has proceeded on two main lines :—

"1.—A gradual extension of scope which has now reached a point which almost justifies the saying, that the Adult School is destined to become the working man's church of the future.

"2.—A gradual extension of the democratic principle in the government of the school, commencing with government by a Teachers' Meeting, passing through various intermediate stages, such as government by a meeting of officers, and government by a committee elected by the school, and finally resulting in a complete system of government by class and school meetings, in which every member has a voice and vote. Time will not admit of my giving a detailed account of the most recent type of Adult School, but the following are a few of its leading characteristics :

"(1) The Presidents of the classes and all other officers of the school are elected annually, and the school is managed by the men themselves.

"(2) It is entirely unsectarian.

"(3) All the classes meet together at the opening and close of school, thus maintaining a strong tie of brotherly love and unity between the different classes.

"(4) Within certain fundamental lines, which can only be altered by a special resolution of the whole school, each class is left free to manage its own affairs ; consequently, in the same school there may be, and often is, considerable variety of detail as between the various classes.

"(5) Every School Society is managed by a committee, on which each class is represented in proportion to its size, and each such Society reports annually to the School Quarterly Meeting.

"An Adult School organised on lines such as these, appears to me to possess a three-fold advantage :

"1.—Economy of teachers or presidents, two or three being sufficient for a school numbering several hundreds.

"2.—Its whole plan and organisation are calculated to develop the latent gifts of its members to the highest degree, and it thus becomes a training school for Christian workers of all sorts.

"3.—It is automatic. Once organised it must go on, as it is not dependent for its success on any one or more men."

(2) *Re-organisation of the F.F.D.S.A.* Before we leave the subject of the Friends' Association, we must refer to the changes in its organisation which have taken place in recent years. Before 1893 this had indeed been so slight that the Association was unable to offer much aid to individual schools, having perforce to confine itself to the publication of statistics, and the occasional sending out of deputations or convening of conferences. For more than forty years, Joseph Storrs Fry, of Bristol, had occupied the laborious position of honorary secretary, until the Association represented a body of some 40,000 scholars (24,000 being adults), and of more than 2,000 teachers. But at last, in 1893, he was relieved by a paid secretary, the late John T. Dorland, and the country was divided into districts for purposes of better administration and local conference. District committees were constituted, each affiliated School appointing representatives according to its numbers. The General Committee also became representative, and is now composed of two members and the secretary of each District Committee, while one member is also appointed by each of the eighteen Quarterly Meetings of the Society of Friends. There are, besides, a president, a vice-president from each district, and a treasurer chosen at the Annual Meeting. The business of the District Committees is to organise local conferences to extend Adult School work, to arrange for deputations to, and to consider any matters brought before them by minutes from, the affiliated schools. The business of the General Committee is to consider requests for affiliation sent forward to it by District Committees, and such other matters as these committees may refer to it. It also endeavours to forward the movement by offering boxes of books, and series of lantern slides, on loan, and by the circulation of Adult School leaflets. Every affiliated School has a right to be represented at the Annual Meeting of the Association. Grants of money are

made by the General Committee to districts for the payment of delegates' travelling expenses, and for general work.*

Local Unions and the National Union.

We need scarcely remind our readers again that the Friends' Association neither covers the whole field of the movement nor does it devote its attention to Adult Schools alone. For many years the Children's Sunday Schools were its principal care, and both its District and General Committees must naturally occupy themselves partly with these.

We have referred to the isolation of the early non-Quaker schools: we must now speak of their gradual inclusion within an organised Adult School movement. In 1884, William White, John Blackham, and others, began this work in the Midlands by establishing the Midland Adult Sunday School Association to link together all the Schools in its district. The objects of this Association are stated to be "to promote mutual intercourse amongst the Adult Schools of the Midlands, to foster and improve existing schools, and to assist in establishing new Schools in the Midlands and other parts of the country." Its field extends over a radius of about twenty miles around Birmingham, and in that district it counts a membership of 84 schools and 12,500 men, beside women and juniors.†

A similar union was formed in Leicester five years later, and known at first as the Leicester and County Working Men's Educational Union, and afterwards as the Leicestershire Adult School Union. From a total of nine Schools at the date of its formation, this Union has increased till it now counts 88 men's and women's schools, with a membership (October, 1902) of about 7,000. Only two of these, with perhaps five per cent. of the total membership, are affiliated with the Friends' Association. For purposes of more thorough organisation, the County Union has been sub-divided and there are now sub-district unions around Loughborough and Hinckley. The London Adult Schools also united in 1889, and those

* Useful as this organisation has undoubtedly proved, perhaps as close a bond between the schools has been found in the circulation of *One and All*. This paper had been the organ of the Midland Association, but was taken over by the F.F.D.S.A. in 1895, and subsequently by the National Council. It was preceded, in the Midlands, by William White's *Monthly Record*, first published in 1869 as a journal of the various branches of Christian work undertaken by the Society of Friends, including Adult Schools, which, however, took at first a somewhat subsidiary position. In 1882 a cheaper issue began and Adult Schools occupied a first place in its secondary title. The *Monthly Record* ceased in 1891, and in that year its place was taken by *One and All*, a monthly Adult School journal, pure and simple.

† Of this total, only about 38 per cent. belong to the Schools of the Friends' Association.

in Somerset in 1890. These Unions again are both independent of the Friends' Association, though several schools in each are also affiliated with it. A Union of the Schools in the counties of Norfolk, Cambridge, and Huntingdon was also formed.* After the formation of these Unions there remained but few schools outside one or other of the organisations, and the dangers of parochialism were thus greatly diminished. But the Unions were not themselves federated, and the greater part of England was without any organisation for the extension of the work beyond the scope of one of the smallest of its religious societies. For many years the question of a National Council of Adult Schools recurred upon the pages of *One and All*, where it was suggested as early as 1891—but it was not until 1898 that the several Unions actually agreed to some form of federation, which was finally accomplished at the first meeting of the National Council held in Leicester, under the presidency of William White, in 1899. Among its first duties were the publication of a complete list of Adult Schools (already compiled by its honorary secretary, Dr. George Newman) and of *One and All*, which now became the unsectarian organ of the whole movement. The second clause of the constitution of the National Council runs as follows :

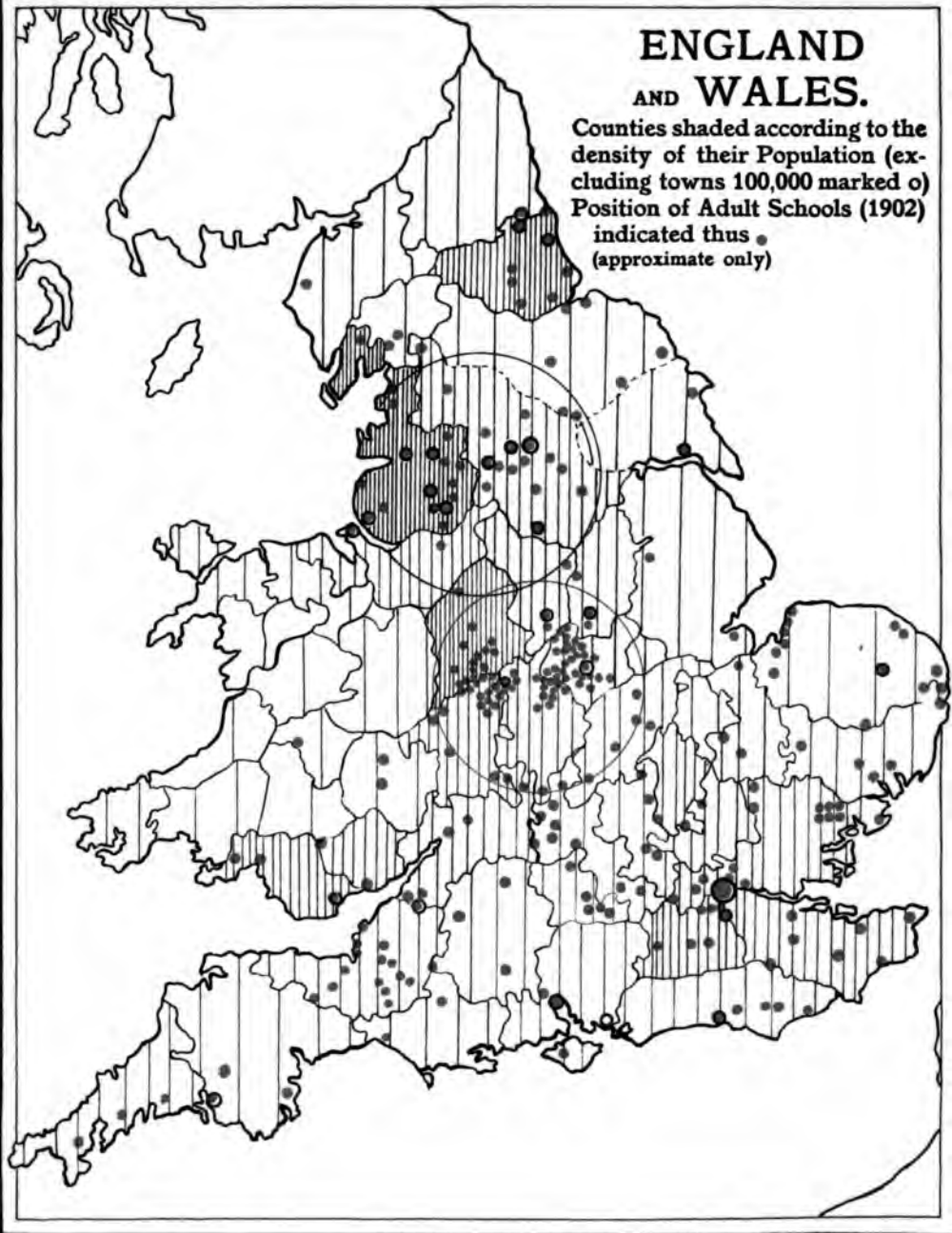
“That the objects of the Council shall be to federate together the existing Adult School Associations, and any similar Associations which shall be hereafter formed, in order to advance the Adult School Movement as a whole, and to form a united executive body for the purpose of dealing with questions affecting the whole Movement. The Council is not empowered to exercise any constitutional control whatever over the Associations affiliated under it.”

The Council consists at the present time of twenty-four members, annually elected, of whom rather more than one half are Quakers. The Friends' Association is represented upon the National Council as well as the other unions. The aim of the Council may be summed up in the phrase, “For an Adult School England.” The immediate cause for its establishment appears to have been the extraordinary progress of the Leicestershire Union, to which we shall refer later. Indeed, local Unions had fully proved the effectiveness of proper organisation, as will be seen by

* The Norfolk, Cambridge, and Huntingdon Union consists of all the schools in that district of the F.F.D.S.A., including schools not affiliated with the Association. Among the minor branches of recent organisation, mention should be made of the United Summer Outings of the Leicestershire Schools, which have now attained to huge dimensions, and the Whitsuntide Co-operative Holiday of the Yorkshire Schools.

ENGLAND AND WALES.

Counties shaded according to the
density of their Population (ex-
cluding towns 100,000 marked o)
Position of Adult Schools (1902)
indicated thus •
(approximate only)



the accompanying Adult School map. In the words of the Chairman of the National Council (W. C. Braithwaite), which will be understood at once on reference to the map facing this page, "Birmingham, the district between Coventry and Loughborough, Mid-Somerset and Colchester, are about the only districts where Adult Schools have been systematically established. Like results would follow like systematic efforts in other places." It was evident that the work need no longer be confined to members of the Society of Friends. If we consider the counties covered by the Midland District Committee of the F.F.D.S.A., that is to say, Derby, Nottingham, Lincoln, Leicester, Warwick, and Staffordshire, we shall find that at the end of 1901 there were 20,000 adult scholars in this district, only one third of whom belonged to the schools of the Association, the remainder being members of two other unions which cover only a part of this field. On the other hand, there have been* no undenominational Unions in the Northern Counties where more than half the strength of the Friends' Association is found, and where a very numerous and intelligent population, as for instance that of Lancashire, is still almost ignorant of the meaning of an Adult School.

The position of the National Council has this autumn been greatly strengthened by the appointment of a paid organising secretary, and above all, by the fact that this secretary is the able and experienced organiser of the Leicestershire Union. There are, therefore, at the present time two well equipped bodies, bent upon upholding and extending the movement in different ways. There is no rivalry between them. They each have their own work to do, a work which gives full scope to the energies of each. For it seems evident to the present writers that this movement is capable of almost indefinite extension, and that it is precisely this form of religious work which the present time demands in all parts of our country; a work in which all denominations of Christians must eventually come to share, and one which must now emerge from the control of one denomination, into an autonomy of its own. At the same time they believe that the Society of Friends has shown itself to be particularly fitted for this kind of work, and that its definite organised share in the movement will continue to be most valuable, both for the advancement of the movement itself and for the welfare of the Quaker Church.

* One has recently been formed on Tyne side.

CHAPTER IV.

RECENT GROWTH AND DECLINE.

"Whilst I would encourage elder Friends to do what they can in this great cause, I should be very sorry to see anything ever done to take the management of our Schools out of the hands of my younger Friends."—*Joseph Sturge at Manchester, 1849.*

Recent Statistics of the Friends' Schools.

AT the end of 1901 the Adult Schools of the Friends' First-day School Association showed a membership of 30,060, an increase upon the preceding year of 2,131, and an increase in average attendance of 1,448.* But the whole truth is not told by the bare rehearsal of this statement. There had been a prior and persistent decrease in the numbers since 1896, and the actual increase upon the total of that year is 1,246, of whom only twenty are men. As far then as the men's schools are concerned, this part of the Movement has fallen behind the increase in population.† We give a table of the totals for the last six years.‡

CLASS.			1896.	1897.	1898.	1899.	1900.	1901.	5 years' Increase	Per cent. of Total.	Per cent. of Class.
Men	...	...	20007	19650	19408	18970	18729	20027	20	·07	·1
Women	...	...	7354	7193	7540	7839	7749	8405	1051	3·65	14·0
Juniors	...	...	1433	1813	1330	1208	1451	1628	195	·68	14·0
Total	...	...	28794	28656	28278	28017	27929	30060	1266	4·40	—

* These figures differ from those in the *Report* of that year, as we have omitted the Sheffield Juniors, (see next note), and have corrected printer's errors in the York and Leeds average attendance figures.

† This statement applies to the so-called "men's" section; there has also been an increase in the number of "juniors" (if we omit the Sheffield juniors, most of whom appear to be children, as we shall do in all subsequent figures) of 195, and probably most of these are lads and youths over fourteen years of age, though some may be girls.

‡ The total of juniors is corrected in accordance with the previous note.

The following table shows the average attendance for the same period :

CLASS.			1896.	1897.	1898.	1899.	1900.	1901.	5 years.	Per cent. of Total.	Per cent. of Class.
Men	...	...	12819	12384	12175	11995	11508	12551	-268	-1.5	-2
Women	...	...	4169	4077	4200	4372	4458	4674	+505	+2.8	+12
Juniors	...	...	876	1184	926	837	889	958	+82	+5	+9
Total	...	...	17864	17645	17301	17204	16855	18183	+319	+1.8	—

While there is a decrease in the average attendance of the Men's Schools amounting to 2 per cent. on the five years, 1901 shows a remarkable increase on 1900, amounting in this section alone to nearly 10 per cent.

These tables show conclusively that the principal increase for the five years has been in the Women's Schools, that in the junior section being of a less stable character. Further tables show the districts in which the increase in membership and attendance has occurred and the increase or decrease in the Men's Schools.

Membership.

F.F.D.S.A. * District.	Total Membership.		Total.		Per cent. Total.		Per cent. District.		Men only.			Remarks.
	1896.	1901.	Inc.	Dec.	Inc.	Dec.	Inc.	Dec.	Inc.	Dec.	% District	
Beds	1329	1605	276	—	1.0	—	21	—	175	—	+17	Dec. W. & J. Inc. in J. Inc. in W. Inc. in W. Dec. W. & J. Inc. W. & J. Dec. W. & J. Inc. in J. Inc. in W. Inc. W. & J. Dec. in W. 8 M. transf'd from J.
Berks	838	709	—	129	—	0.4	—	15½	—	102	-17	
Bristol	1632	1930	298	—	1.0	—	18	—	31	—	+2½	
Devon	253	294	41	—	0.1	—	16	—	12	—	+6	
Durham	1808	1816	8	—	—	—	½	—	—	32	-1½	
Essex	1531	1318	—	213	—	0.7	—	14	—	137	-17	
Lancs	929	1463	534	—	1.8	—	58	—	17	—	+3	
London	2516	2931	415	—	1.4	—	16	—	451	—	+30	
Midland	6057	6699	642	—	2.2	—	10½	—	522	—	+11	
Norfolk	1760	1699	—	61	—	0.2	—	3½	—	145	-12	
Western	1037	1208	171	—	0.6	—	16½	—	49	—	+7	
Yorks	8884	7630	—	1254	—	4.3	—	14	—	829	-13½	
Ireland	220	220	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	—	+3½	
Weekday †	—	538	538	—	1.9	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Totals	28794	30060	2923	1657	10	5.6	—	—	1265	1245	—	
Net do.	—	—	1266	—	4.4	—	—	—	20	—	—	

† Week-day Women's Schools were by the title of the Association somewhat pedantically excluded till 1899.

* The Districts are : — 1, Bedfordshire (including Herts, Bucks, Northants). 2, Berks and Oxon. 3, Bristol and Somerset (including Wilts). 4, Devon and Cornwall. 5, Durham (including North-

Attendance. In many respects the average attendance is a better test of growth than mere membership, which is differently reckoned in the various schools.

District.	Men only.		Inc.	Dec.	Total. (M.W. & J.)		Inc.	Dec.
	1896.	1901.			1896.	1901.*		
Beds	597	680	83	—	774	933	159	—
Berks	453	326	—	127	552	438	—	114
Bristol	760	811	51	—	1032	1196	164	—
Devon	109	123	14	—	153	174	21	—
Durham	779	663	—	116	1020	1016§	—	4
Essex	523	430	—	93	996	853	—	143
Lancs	395	407	12	—	590	780	190	—
London	924	1211	287	—	1488	1752†	264	—
Midland	3224	3531	307	—	4142	4412‡	270	—
Norfolk	819	703	—	116	1259	1140	—	119
Western	506	509	3	—	633	786||	153	—
Yorks	3634	3066	—	568	5123	4320	—	803
Ireland	96	91	—	5	102	91	—	11
Weekday	—	—	—	—	—	292	292	—
Total	12819	12551	= —	268	17864	18183	= +	319

Consideration of these four tables emphasises certain facts : (1) That the increase in the men's classes during the five years, small as it appears upon investigation, disappears entirely when we turn to the records of actual attendance. (2) There was a steady downward tendency till the close of 1900. Last year there was a sudden recovery, and an increase took place in the larger districts (Midland 514, Yorkshire 183, London 133), and this increase bids fair to recover lost ground during the present year. (3) The growth of the Friends' Schools during these five years has been in the women's section, where in spite of a slight falling off in 1897, the increase has been well maintained year by year, in nearly every district ;

umberland and part of North Yorks). 6, Essex and Suffolk. 7, Lancashire and Cheshire (including Cumberland and Westmoreland). 8, London (including Kent, Surrey, Sussex, and Hants). 9, Midland (including Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Notts, Lincolnshire). 10, Norfolk, Cambridge, Huntingdon. 11, Western (including Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Shropshire and South Wales). 12, Yorkshire.

* The Attendance at the Weekday Schools may be apportioned as follows :—

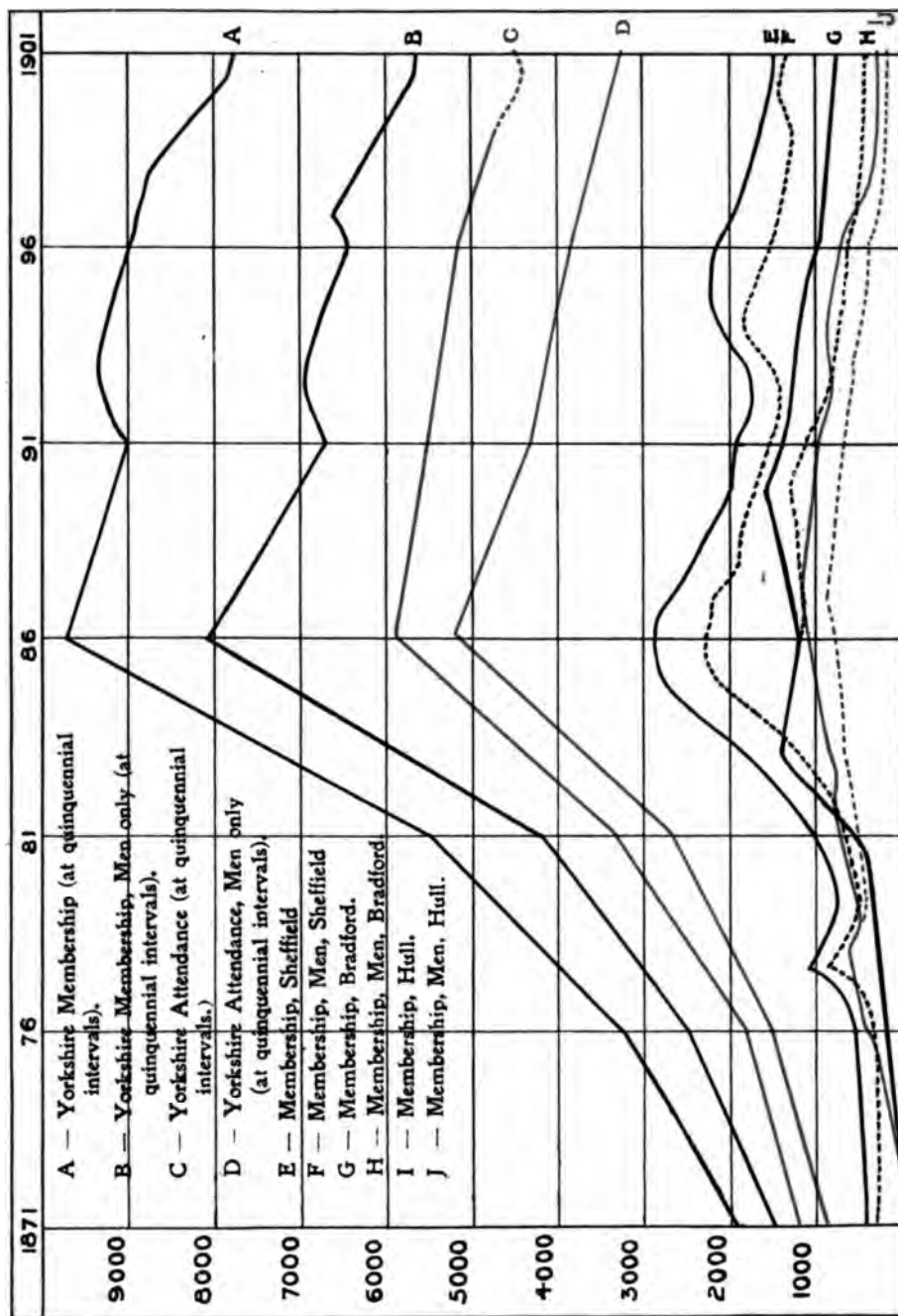
§ 30.

† 122.

‡ 87.

|| 53.

CHART illustrating the Progress of Adult Schools in YORKSHIRE.



though here the smaller districts have done best, the Midland and Yorkshire districts showing a decrease, and London a small increase only if the "weekday" figures are included. (4) If we put aside the weekday schools (which were nearly all in existence in 1896, though excluded on nominal grounds from the Association till 1899), five of the twelve English districts show a decrease in general average attendance, and two-thirds of this (and more than half the men's decrease) is accounted for by the Yorkshire district. In the seven remaining, there has been a general increase, two-fifths of this (and three-fifths of the men's increase) being contributed in nearly equal parts by London and the Midlands.* (5) Leaving the Yorkshire and Midland figures for later consideration, we find that the increase in the London district, which includes Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex, and Kent, has been largely due to the opening of new schools in London or their admission to the Association,† which accounts for 68 per cent. of the increase in the men's average attendance. Of the original twenty-one schools, two were Women's Schools, nine have increased, while ten have decreased, the latter, except Croydon, being on the whole the smaller schools. Two small schools have been relinquished. Most of the London Men's Schools are small: the average attendance of thirty of the Men's Schools being only twenty every Sunday.

Yorkshire.

In order to understand the arrest in the growth of the Friends' Schools we must now give some thought to the Yorkshire district. The largest district of the F.F.D.S.A., and still in 1901 containing the greatest number of adult scholars, it is, as we have seen, that which shows the most considerable decline. The story of the Yorkshire Schools is full of instruction. Its outlines may be inferred by a glance at the accompanying chart. After twenty years from the founding of the first Yorkshire school, there were, in 1871, twelve schools with an average attendance of about 1,200 (1,000 men) or between one-third and one quarter of the total attendance in the Association. Then followed fifteen years of

* The Midlands were decreasing till 1900, while the London increase has been fairly continuous. The proportion of the Metropolitan population reached is as yet very small indeed.

† Thus of the thirty-seven schools enumerated in 1901 only twenty-one appear on the list for 1896.

rapid growth. In 1886 their average attendance had reached 6,000 (5,200 men), very nearly half the total for the Friends' Adult Schools. A steady decline now commenced, and in the succeeding fifteen years the attendance fell to the extent of 1,500, and since the other sections of the schools had increased, this meant a decrease of about 1,800 men. The attendance is now rather less than 25 per cent. of the whole, in both sections.*

The following is an analysis of the Yorkshire average attendance in 1886 and 1901 :

	Men only.	Total.		Men only.	Total.
1886. Schools in 21 towns			1901. 3 Schools dead ...	79	79
Attendance ...	5179	5974	Decrease in 11		
1901. New do. 11	275	376	Schools ...	2165	2267
Increase in 7 Schools	184	417	29 Schools now show	3594	4421
—			—		
32	5638	6767	32	5638	6767

The seven schools which show an increase of the total attendance are as follows :

	Men only. 1886. 1901. Inc. %				Total of M. W. & J. 1886. 1901. Inc. %				Remarks.
Barnsley ...	302	279	-23	-7	302	311	9	3	Women's School opened 1890.
Dewsbury ...	90	124	34	+38	109	181	72	46	
Doncaster ...	66	85	19	+39	66	105	39	59	Women's School (1886).
Huddersfield	45	82	37	+82	98	174	76	75	2 new branches, and another only opened
Leeds ...	456	525	69	+15	585	709	124	21	in 1884, and new Junior class.
Wakefield ...	50	52	2	+4	50	62	12	24	Women's School (1895).
York ...	247	293	46	+18	291	376	85	29	2 new branches.
	1256	1440	184	+15	1501	1918	417	28	16% w. & j., 12% men.

* In the chart and in the figures which follow there are several modifications of the F.F.D.S.A. returns which should be noted, viz., after 1893 the F.F.D.S.A. enumerates a new section for "juniors" ; as these were previously classed in the returns as "men," they are included in the men's figures—except always the Sheffield juniors, which have been omitted in accordance with the note on page 42. Middlesbrough is here also included in the Yorkshire figures, since it is a Yorkshire school, though in Quaker organisation it belongs to the Durham Quarterly Meeting ; and the figures for Acomb (near York), which left the Association in 1898 and has now returned, have been included in the York totals.

The eleven schools which have decreased are as follows :

	Men only.				Total of Members.				Remarks.
	1886.	1901.	Dec.	%	1886.	1901.	Dec.	%	
Ackworth ...	30	10	20	66	30	10	20	66	Women's School (1886).
Bradford ...	646	299	347	53	646	461	185	29	
Brighouse ...	50	29	21	42	82	42	40	49	
Halifax ...	55	35	20	36	64	47	17	27	Women's School (1886).
Horsforth ...	82	24	58	71	82	38	44	54	
Hull ...	532	106	426	80	631	215	416	66	
Malton ...	88	38	50	57	119	50	69	58	Women's School (1900).
Scarborough	207	142	65	31	268	176	92	34	
Middlesbro'	122	25	97	80	207	46	161	78	
Sheffield ...	1930	915	1015	53	2163	973	1190	55	Women's School (1900).
Settle ...	102	56	46	46	102	69	33	32	
	3844	1679	2165	=56	4394	2127	2267	=52	
									Women's Schools increase 18% or 2% on the total. Men's decrease 54%.

Of these schools three, Sheffield, Bradford, and Hull were in 1886 the second, fourth and fifth largest Adult Schools in the country, accounting for 58 per cent. of the total Yorkshire attendance, and 25 per cent. of the total for the Friends' Schools. They are accountable for about 80 per cent. of the Yorkshire decrease. We have therefore added to the chart facing p. 45 the lines roughly indicating the stages of their history. The position of the four other large schools (over 250 average attendance)—Leeds, Barnsley, York, and Scarborough—seems to call for a word in passing. At Leeds the attendance is swelled by 96 "juniors," these are a new section ; the Morley branch (opened in 1884) has added 80 to its attendance, and is practically a new school, while other new branches account for another sixty. There has, therefore, been a decline in the older section of the Men's School there. At Barnsley also there has been a small decrease in the Men's School. Two branches, really new schools, independent of their parent, contribute 124 to the York total, the Central school showing a considerable decrease. The decrease at Scarborough is partly due to the old fishing population of the town having given place to men of a different type, and the period of transition having affected the school. Broadly speaking, we find that any increase in the Yorkshire schools has been principally consequent on the founding of new schools, and the opening of classes for women and juniors ; while the decrease has been due in the first

place to the decay of certain of the larger schools. To this latter point we must now turn our attention.

The year 1886 marks the close of the first twenty years of Adult School work in Yorkshire.* It found 321 teachers at work in the schools, and even if these were not all Quakers the number shows that Yorkshire Friends had now thrown themselves earnestly into the work.† The teachers were very unequally distributed among the various schools. Thus Leeds, Bradford and Hull had each from 1,000 to 1,200 scholars on their books, but while the first had twenty-nine teachers, the second had eighteen and the third only nine ; with 400-500 scholars, Middlesbrough had twenty-one teachers, Barnsley only five. The number of teachers was not recorded after 1892, and the small decrease in their number which had then taken place is not at all proportionate to the decrease in scholars, and is more than accounted for by the Sheffield returns which we will now consider.

1.—*Sheffield.* A remarkable growth had taken place in the membership of this school. In 1881 it stood at 910‡ (average attendance 731), in 1885 it had tripled and stood at 2,758 (average 2,282), next year it was 2,866 (average 2,150), in 1887 2,860 (average 2,237), but after that time it rapidly declined. The F.F.D.S.A. report of 1881 had spoken of the Sheffield scholars as about as numerous as their staff of teachers and their premises could accommodate. But the afternoon classes, which appear to have been opened immediately after the Sheffield Conference of 1876, in order more fully to utilise the premises available, now began to increase rapidly ; in 1881 they were as largely attended as those in the morning ; in 1885 both had increased, but the afternoon attendance was now 1,371, against 808 ; while in 1887 only 664 met in the morning, 1,453 in the afternoon.

In 1892 the last date on which the figures were separated, the morning attendance had fallen to 425, the afternoon to 931, about 35 per cent. less than in 1887 in each instance.

* The average age of the eighteen schools enumerated on pages 46-47 was almost exactly twenty years.

† In 1886 the total number of Adult School teachers is returned at 714, and the membership of the Society of Friends at 15,453 ; while Yorkshire Friends numbered 2,497 ; that is to say, the proportion of Friends teaching in Adult Schools was at least twice as great in Yorkshire as elsewhere.

‡ The figures always include teachers with scholars, and are those of the F.F.D.S.A. reports.

It is singular that the decrease in the Yorkshire schools should date from the year of the great schism in the Liberal party, but while we are bound to regard this as something more than a coincidence, we must seek the main causes of the decline elsewhere. In Sheffield they include the growth of the P.S.A. Movement, which would tell especially against the afternoon classes, and the more recent formation of large Men's Bible Classes under the charge of the curates of several working-class parishes.* In 1885 or 1886 a severe epidemic of small-pox, accompanied by the closing of the public schools, caused the temporary suspension of absentee visiting, and for some time it is doubtful whether this work quite recovered. Occurring at the "psychological moment," this incident may have seriously weakened the unity of the School. A more general cause may perhaps be found in the gradual dying out of the elementary classes and their attractiveness. For many years, and notably from 1875-85 the evident advantage of a knowledge of the art of writing was brought home to the men by their children, who were leaving school and going out into the world, and many men first came to the Adult Schools during these years, with the object of learning to write. Again, while in 1883 branches were successfully opened at Heeley and Attercliffe, branches do not always result in a sustained increase. Some lack proper leadership, and fall away, with loss to the school which founded them. We may add that the growth of 1881 to 1885 partook of the nature of a religious revival, and the increased membership which such a revival brings is proverbially difficult to maintain.

To sum up, the causes of the decrease appear to have been an inability to retain many of the members who joined the school from 1881-5, or to attract new members by the old methods. New methods have been tried, but the counter-attractions have so far been too powerful.

* By the courtesy of the Rev. F. Swainson we are enabled to give the figures of his large Bible Classes at All Saints, Sheffield. The Men's Class was formed in 1898 with nine members, it has now 2,000. The Women's has been in existence six months and already counts 1,150 members. The Men's Class is held in the Church from three to four on Sunday afternoons; the Women's on Monday evenings. They consist of Bible reading, twenty-five minutes address, extempore prayer, Sankey's hymns, etc.; in short, they are a homely service, conducted by Mr. F. Swainson himself. Their numbers considerably exceed that of the whole Sheffield Adult School, and they are still growing. Classes like these point to the possibility of extending the scope of the Bible Class. They are not Adult Schools.

The school has also suffered to some extent by decentralisation and the weakening of the bonds of union.

2.—*Bradford.* In Bradford we note that the actual decline dates from 1890, although the Men's School decreased after 1883. The Bradford Schools differ from most others in meeting at two in the afternoon,* and in consequence have felt severely the competition of P.S.A.'s. They have also been held in Board Schools, and not having premises of their own have been unable to provide their members with recreation rooms for week-night use. But it is significant that the decline in the Men's School dates from the emigration of several divisions from their old centre at the Mechanics' Institute into Board Schools in various parts of the town, which were opened to them for the first time in 1883, as the result of a special effort made at the previous election by the Adult School Executive Committee. The scattering of forces which ensued upon this step seems to have been a cause of the decline which immediately followed. At the time of the last report there were on an average only 300 men to divide every Sunday between eleven separate schools, and a few large classes leave but a very small handful of men for the others. In the days of the school's numerical prosperity, a large body of men belonging to the various classes held at the Mechanics' Institute met together for the opening and closing of school, and the individual classes were doubtless stimulated by the enthusiasm of numbers. The decentralisation of the school which began with the grant of full local autonomy to each class, has apparently been carried too far.†

An increase in the Men's numbers took place between 1888 and 1891 perhaps in sympathy with the growth of the recently started Women's School, but it was only temporary: the school reports speak of the strong counter-attractions of the P.S.A. and the Labour Church, of a struggle to meet the heavier expenses of a larger rent with a smaller membership, and of a change in the character of the lessons themselves. The old Bible lesson and homely discussion seemed in some of the classes to be giving place to a debate inaugurated by a speaker "from outside." The presiding

* In the list of the F.F.D.S.A., 230 out of 300 Men's Schools or Classes are held in the morning.

† It may also be noted that the high-water-mark of the men's school synchronises with the mayoralty of a Friend, which may have given special prominence and popularity to the schools. (F.F.D.S.A. report, June, 1883.)

officers themselves seem to have shared in the sense of discouragement, which must have been accentuated by their comparative isolation, and we note that only four of the twenty-six named in the 1891 report remain in 1901. Another change which doubtless had some effect upon certain of the scholars, was the reduction of the rate of interest upon savings, consequent upon their transfer in 1894 to the Yorkshire Penny Bank. It must also be remembered that the rapid growth at Bradford took place in the first decade of the school-life, in the full vigour of the men who inaugurated the work ; it is possible that as their time and strength became engaged in many social and political labours, the succeeding generation may have been more attracted to other forms of religious activity.

3.—*Hull.* Upon turning to the Hull figures and the average attendance in the Men's School we are at once struck by the coincidence that the F.F.D.S.A. reports for 1886 and 1887 mark their high-water-mark, while the first report that betrays a decrease enumerates two branches beside the parent school. As a matter of fact the first branches were opened in 1885, the Men's Central School having reached its maximum attendance in the previous year. The total average attendance in the Men's School as a whole was highest in 1886. Thus the coincidence of the exact dates is only in appearance. We subjoin a tabular statement.

HULL—Men's Classes only.

Average attendances, year ending September 30th.

	1884.	1885.	1886.	1887.	1888.	1889.
Central School - - -	457	403	349	320	303	285
Dansom Lane & Constable St. -	—	63	178	189	162	117
Other branches - - -		—	—	—	—	16
Total - - -	457	466	527	509	465	418

These figures suggest that though the formation of branches is a necessary stage in the growth of every healthy school, their formation, if it takes away from the teaching staff and the active members of the

parent school, may be followed by a sense of discouragement and weakness among those left behind. In any community the test of colonisation is a severe one, and it would appear that some large schools have not been fitted for this task. Moreover, when the new branch depends largely on the labours of a solitary teacher it does not always succeed in developing the catholic spirit which characterised the co-operative labours of several. A healthy school rarely continues to depend on the exclusive leadership of one teacher, its guidance falls to the care of several. And in this respect the Hull School has perhaps been less fortunate than some others. For while there have been able men among its teachers, the number of teachers has been small in comparison with the numbers of the school. Thus the school has been seriously crippled from time to time by the removal of one or other of its little band of active workers.

Conclusions.

A review of the history of the Yorkshire Schools shows that they increased earlier and more rapidly in proportion to the membership of the Society of Friends than in the country at large : even now there are nearly three scholars to every member of the Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting, while the ratio in the whole country is rather less than two scholars to every Quaker. In 1886 they were four to each Yorkshire Friend.*

In 1886 those of the Yorkshire Schools which still exist were entering on the third decade of their existence. From the beginning the movement has principally depended on the labour and enthusiasm of young men, but the young men who had founded the schools were young no longer ; the scholars too were getting into middle life. Their teachers were being called to various other forms of religious service, they were become the pillars of the little religious Society to which they belonged. Meanwhile the nature of the problem itself had changed. Working-men no longer wanted to be taught to write ; other opportunities opened out for the encouragement of thrift ; the more intelligent found their evenings largely occupied in committee work for friendly, co-operative, and trade societies, and thus had less leisure to employ in such work as the Adult

* The ratio in Warwick, Leicester and Stafford Quarterly Meeting is now something like six to one.

School provides. The P.S.A. movement, and the opening of denominational Bible classes for men at various places of worship provided for some of the needs which the Adult School had originally met. The denominational character of the Schools carried on exclusively by a religious body so strongly characterised in political as well as in religious views as the Quakers', became in some districts, and especially at certain times, a cause of limitation. The attitude of the thoughtful working-man towards the Bible was changing, and Friends were not always ready to take advantage of the strong position in which their own spiritual testimony ought to have placed them. The great need of the time, the need for living spiritual fellowship based upon pastoral work among the men and women both of our towns and villages, is one which the Adult Schools were specially calculated to meet ; but here again they seem too often to have fallen short. It is to be feared that in spite of the devoted and magnificent work which is being carried on by individual teachers and presidents, the second generation as a whole has hardly taken up this work *as a calling* in the same way as did their fathers. They go into it as a natural duty : but do they hear the individual call—do they wait upon the vision ? It may also be that the number of young men Friends who are offering themselves as teachers in Yorkshire is actually smaller than formerly, and even that the number available is, as we suspect, decreasing.

In many respects the Yorkshire story reminds us also how difficult is the art of real religious education. It is one thing to preach or to lecture, it is quite another thing to stimulate religious thought, and to quicken in others the evangelical spirit. In some schools we fear there has been a confusion of the true evangelical spirit with so-called "evangelical theology," and this has sometimes resulted in the growth of complacency and of spiritual parasitism. In others, sufficient care has not been taken to avoid encouraging a selfish desire for merely personal profit among the men, and the truly democratic spirit of independence has not thriven. But perhaps the most evident cause of their arrested growth is made clear when we compare the Yorkshire Schools with those of the purely undenominational or interdenominational Leicestershire Union ; for the Yorkshire Quakers are less than one per thousand of the population, and in Yorkshire the Movement remains almost exclusively under the care of

Friends. We cannot, therefore, wonder if the scholars number only about two in every thousand of the people.

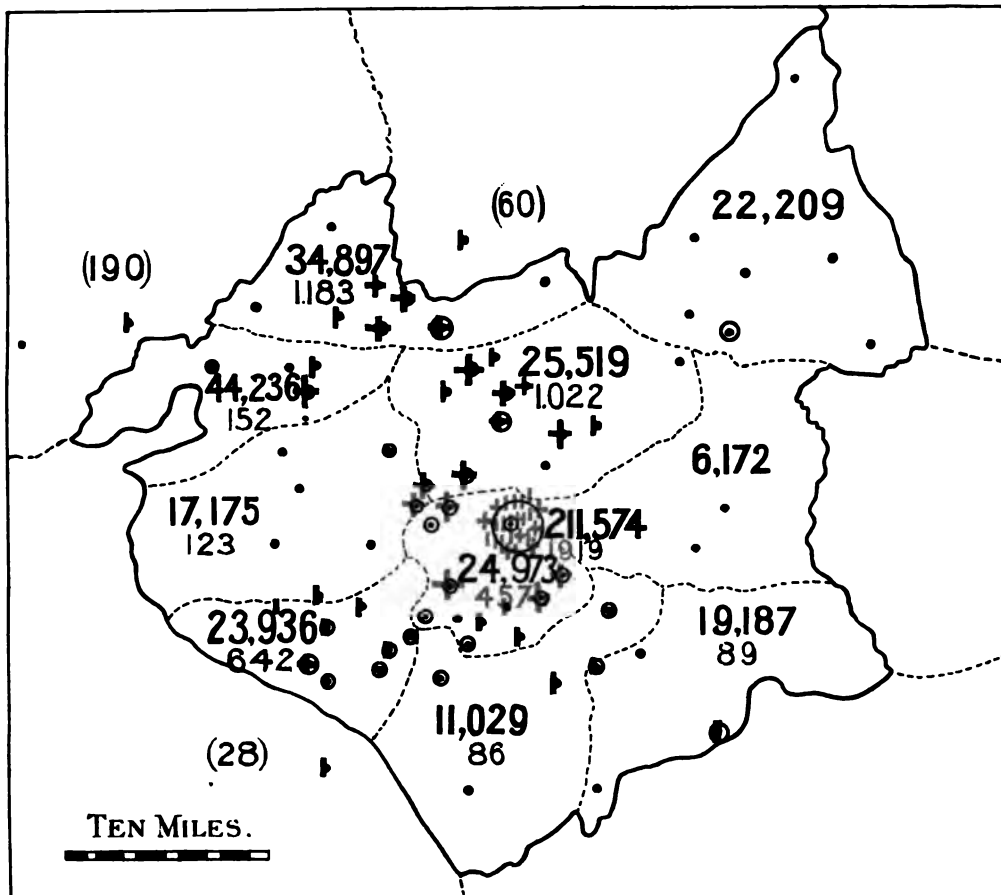
Leicestershire.

The growth of the Leicestershire Schools is probably the most significant incident in recent Adult School history. In 1891 there were 8 schools affiliated to the Union with an average attendance of 401; ten years later there were 76* schools with an attendance of 3,936 (3086 men), and a membership of nearly 6,000. At the present time the membership of 87 schools stands at 7,000. Two of these schools or classes are affiliated to the Friends' Association, their attendance remaining nearly the same as in 1891. This fact gives some indication of the interdenominational character of the Leicestershire movement, and how widely the work initiated by Friends has been taken up. At the end of 1901 there were 59 Men's Schools, with 4,648 members (3,086 attendance), 59 presidents, and 117 vice-presidents. Twenty of the Schools with a membership of 1,686 (attendance 1085) were in the borough of Leicester; 39 were in the county with 2,962 members, and 2,001 average attendance. A large increase had taken place during the year, and this was almost entirely in the county schools. Almost exactly half the population of the county is within the borough, so that the ratio of adult scholars to the population is now higher in the small towns and villages. A glance at the accompanying map will show that even here a large field remains untouched, the schools being practically confined to four of the ten registration districts, containing about half the rural population.

The people of Leicestershire (434,000) are largely engaged in the manufacture of boots, shoes, and hosiery, and these manufactures are carried on in various villages and small towns as well as in the borough. In some instances the factories are owned by the workers themselves, the Co-operative factories employing over 1,100 workers, but only 130 of these are in the smaller towns. The neighbouring Co-operative district of Wellingborough and Kettering † contains some 17 similar societies, employing 1,700 persons in 12 different towns and villages. It is interesting to compare the two counties of Leicester and Northampton in this connection, for the character of their population and industry cannot be very dissimilar.

* Women's Schools are counted as separate units. † This slightly overlaps the borders of Leicestershire.

LEICESTERSHIRE ADULT SCHOOLS, 1902.



Explanation : Towns and Villages •
 Co-operative Societies ○
 Adult Schools, Men's, 1902. |
 Adult Schools, Women's, 1902. —
 Black figures—Population (1901) in Registration Districts
 Red figures—A.S. Members. (1901) in Registration Districts

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At present the Adult School movement in the latter county is but beginning, the average attendance at its schools being about 150, but the recent growth of the new school at Rushden leads us to hope that an increase may yet take place in Northamptonshire, not incommensurate with that in the neighbouring county. Any comparison of the extension of Adult Schools and of Distributive Co-operation shows at once that they do not run together. The map facing page 41 shows the difference of the centre of the two movements. Half the co-operative trade of the country (deducting the figures of the Wholesale which represent sales to the retail Societies) is done within the black circle comprising Lancashire, where the Adult School movement is singularly weak, the West Riding, and parts of Derbyshire and Cheshire. Half the members of Adult Schools are to be found within the red circle, that is to say in the very centre of the map. If a member of a co-operative society be taken as representing a family of five persons, nearly half the population of Yorkshire and Lancashire are co-operators, and only one third of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire.

But the interesting and important fact about the Leicester movement is that it is purely undenominational. Individual schools may or may not have a more or less denominational colour, but the movement as a whole has none. Thus the numerical insignificance of the body which first inaugurated this work, and gave it organisation and ideals, has not hampered its growth; but men and women of every shade of religious and political opinion and of every social class have been bound together in it. It is said that in certain localities the talk, even at county dinners cannot be kept away from a subject in which several of the guests are so keenly interested; while a Leicestershire Member of Parliament was recently astonished at the ignorance of the movement displayed by other Members of the House. These incidents show that in Leicestershire the movement has attracted public interest. It now reaches about one-twentieth of the adult population of the county; in some villages a much larger proportion, and in Shepshed probably about one fifth. For the sake of comparison we append a table showing the average attendance at some* of the larger Adult Schools and the proportion of the men in the several towns who are present every Sunday.

* The London and Colchester (town) figures available do not lend themselves to the purpose of this comparison. The Adult males are estimated at one fourth of the population.

Town.	Population, 1901.	Attendance at Men's School, 1901	Approximate Percentage of Adult Males.
Birmingham	522182	4499*	3½
Yorkshire	3585122	3066	1½
Leicestershire	440907	2001	1¼
Leicester	211574	1085	2
Sheffield	380717	915	1
Norwich	111728	? 750	2¾
Bristol	328842	719	1
Coventry	69877	360	2
Leeds	428953	319	1¼
Luton	36404	318	3½
Bradford	279809	299	1¼
Barnsley	41083	279	2¾
York	77793	258	1½
Darlington	44496	228	2
Loughborough	21508	217†	4
Shepshed	5293	210	16

This table suggests the hope that the life of many villages and small manufacturing towns may be strengthened and purified by the agency so successfully at work in Shepshed, Loughborough, Luton and Barnsley.

The increase in the Leicestershire schools is comparable to that in Yorkshire between 1876 and 1886, and it seems as yet to have suffered no such check as that experienced in the latter year throughout the northern county. Their unity has not been broken by the high party feeling consequent upon the war of 1899-1901. Many of the schools have not been tried by the test of time; but as yet the tide is still flowing, and there is no lack of enthusiasm either among the leaders or the rank and file. Neither is there any laxity in the local organisation of the Movement, which indeed appears to be more perfect than in the country at large. The area of the Leicestershire Union is comparatively small, but in order to secure closer affiliation, two sub-districts have been formed, as we have already noted, with centres at Loughborough and Hinckley.‡ Considering the existence of these sub-districts with their own periodical meetings, the monthly Council meetings of the union held in Leicester are fairly well

* September, 1901, only.

† We understand that the attendance since July, 1900, has been about 400, or 7½ per cent.

‡ The latter is as yet a small district, perhaps too small for the degree of isolation which separate organisation may foster.

attended. Each of the seventy-six schools is entitled to send two delegates and one teacher or superintendent, and the larger schools more in proportion to their numbers. Two hundred and fifty in all are entitled to attend ; the average attendance in 1902 was seventy-six, about half the Schools being directly represented at each meeting. Delegates from the Women's Schools attend these meetings and are included in the figures given. The value of this close organisation, especially where the movement is not under the care of any other organised religious body, must be evident. Constant interchange of visits and discussion of difficulties, the assistance of discouraged, or of young schools, and the inspiring and broadening result of contact with many fellow workers are among its advantages. These ends are also served by the large circulation of the local edition of *One and All* (2,500 copies per month, nearly equal to the average attendance in the Men's Schools), and the publication of *The Beacon* by the Loughborough sub-district.

What impresses a visitor to some of the country schools is the fresh and practical spirit which is in evidence. Here are the men of the village working out for themselves the most profitable method of spending an hour and a half of their Sunday leisure, and they appear to bring to the problem a healthy independence of thought and an ability for co-operation which promise well for the future. The hearty spirit of the School affirms that the members feel they are accomplishing their purpose, and are not merely pursuing an established convention. The breadth of their platform seems to ensure for them the active assistance of all earnest, broad-minded men—so that there should be no arrested growth, consequent on a scarcity of teachers. The first half-hour is still utilised as a time of general instruction. Dictation will sometimes take the place of copy-book writing ; or the teachers from the public schools will give short lessons in history, science, or geography. The Savings fund is much in evidence. Collections are freely made for charitable purposes. The Bible reading or religious instruction of the school varies very much in character. In one class great freedom of discussion is permitted and encouraged, at another all discussion is deprecated. There seems to be a general determination to exclude from the schools anything like partisan addresses ; and there is no welcome to the agents of other organisations as such, however useful their

purpose. This is not a limitation of the school's scope, it is a deliberate recognition of the claims of unity and catholicity of spirit, and liberty of conviction. The Adult School exists for the purpose of developing the religious spirit among its members, and this justifies the exclusion of all speakers who wish to use its platform for any other purposes whatever. Even free discussion cannot, as a rule, neutralise the schismatical and narrowing effect of dogmatic or partisan teaching. The ultimate purpose of the school is to intensify the social spirit by associating men together for the free study of the deeper problems of life, viewed in relation to the ideal of manhood set before them in the Gospels—it aims to lead men to think truly and nobly, rather even, than to give them true and noble thoughts. Such at least is the impression gathered by us. Subtle and insidious dangers must attend upon such methods of work. They can only be met by a watchful and prayerful loyalty to the ideal. Wherever it is found, the freedom of the spirit requires the power of the spirit also. Men must be brought to face the problems of the life they live, troublesome and thorny though these problems be, and they must be conducted wisely and spiritually through the discussion of these problems. If this be attained, it is worth all sorts of failure and discouragement in order to attain it. For although it may not be the ultimate purpose of the Spirit to create such a religious club, or fellowship—yet such a fellowship provides a sort of tinder-box wherein the spark and glow of inspiration kindles into a flame.

The Midland Association.

The growth in Leicestershire is not more remarkable in itself than the growth of the Midland Schools, and notably the branches of Severn Street and the Priory, during the last two years. It is matter of common knowledge that the Birmingham Schools resolved to erect a living monument to the memory of their beloved President, the late William White, in the lives of scholars brought into the schools. In 1900, the year of his decease, the average attendance in the Friends' Schools was 3,372 (men 2,625), at the end of 1901 it had risen to 3,881 (men 3,104, juniors 26). In April, 1902, it stood at 5,040, and in July, 4,854 (an increase upon the twelve months of 934, or of 762 men). This last figure includes eight new branches, comprising 269 men and 169 women.

Although the figures of the Midland Association cannot be given in such detail, they witness to a similar increase in the other schools of the district, nine new branches beside those of Severn Street being enumerated in the Report for 1901. Including the seventeen schools of the Severn Street group, the Midland Association then counted eighty-four Men's Schools, with an average attendance for 1901 of 8,066 (an increase of 1,279 over the attendance for 1900, Severn Street accounting for rather less than two-fifths both of the men's increase and attendance). No reference is made in the report to Women's Schools. We trust that the good example of the Leicestershire Union and of the Priory may soon be followed by the Midland Association as a whole.

We have already spoken of the changes in government at Severn Street. The last report of the Midland Association describes a similar change in the election and constitution of its own General Committee, which now consists of the Acting Superintendent and one other annually elected representative from each associated school. This large committee of 170 members meets quarterly; the executive of fourteen, every month. There is also an Extension Committee (Mr. E. J. Fullwood, hon. sec.), whose duty it is to seek the co-operation of individual schools in forming branches or in founding new schools, especially in the midst of the poorest districts of Birmingham. Great care is taken to find suitable leaders for the new schools, and these leaders are frequently chosen from among the members of the older classes. The motto of the extension work seems to be, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He send forth labourers;" and while there may be few who are able to deal with men collectively, it is being recognised that there are many members of adult classes already fitted for a "one soul ministry," who in its exercise may develop larger gifts. The object of the extension work is two-fold, to answer the manifest needs of the city and to find occupation for the special spiritual talents of adult scholars. Again, as in the days of their founder, the Birmingham schools are reaching men and youths of a class "for the most part little reached by other religious bodies." They are taking up the work of the Salvation Army, and doing it upon a Quaker basis, if not under the Quaker name. It is the work not of a spiritual tyranny but of a religious democracy, a true fellowship. These, not those, are the true

Friars of the twentieth century, Brothers of the Order of Penitence. And while Severn Street has done its share, it is to be remembered that the Clark Street School, which is purely undenominational in character, is the leader in this work, which demands in its methods the unconventional "liberty of the Spirit." We cannot more suitably conclude this chapter than by quoting a paragraph from the Midland Association's Report for 1901 :

"The results accomplished last year show clearly that under suitable leaders Schools can be established almost anywhere. Not the greatest dreamer can picture to himself the blessed effects of a wide extension of the movement. Some faint idea of it may be gathered from what has been done by some of the Adult Schools in gathering in men of a class which are for the most part little reached by other religious bodies. No one can have read in *One and All* the Reports of some of these Schools without having had his enthusiasm deeply stirred and his imagination touched with visions of the great possibilities of the work. But if our opportunities are great, great too are our responsibilities. In our own power we can never meet them. The Master's words, 'Without Me ye can do nothing,' deepen in meaning to men earnestly endeavouring to serve Him in this work. May we all increasingly recognise that it is His work, and that the only sufficient motive power for it is love, love springing from devotion to our great Leader, who taught us, 'One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren,' a truth that must permeate the lives of Adult School men to their very depths if they are to do any lasting good in a work like ours."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE CLASS.

“They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.”

MATT. ix. 1.

WE have now discussed the need for Adult Schools and traced in broad outline the history, aims, and character of the Adult School Movement.

We did not propose, and have not attempted, an elaborate treatise, but our study would be incomplete without some more detailed description of the inner working of an Adult School class. It may therefore be well, before drawing our conclusions, to devote some further space to the methods of teaching and the system of class visiting, which practical experience commends.

For if we examine the causes of success or failure in any institution we shall continually be impressed with the necessity for organisation.

It may be true in a sense, though the aphorism is not without its dangers, “that the idea creates the organisation ; the organisation destroys the idea” ; but it is certainly true, *pace* Edward Caird, that organisation has its proper function in its own due measure and place.

The organisation of class visiting, for example, draws out sympathy in an effective and practical way. Only when organisation cramps action and limits fellowship is it a menace ; not where it tends to what may be called the “conservation of energy.” The successful Adult School worker recognises the radical importance of *systematic husbandry*.

It is an oft-repeated statement that "the basis of an Adult School is the *practical* teaching of Jesus Christ," that the Adult School "does not concern itself with the spreading of special theories, but aims at helping the members in their actual lives." These words draw their emphasis from the contrast so generally afforded between Christian theory and practice. The elaborate discourse, the rigid ceremony, the want of true homeliness which mark so much of our public worship have given the Adult Schools their opportunity.

The men who seek out the Adult Class are seeking, not a doctrine, but a fellowship, not God in His awful dignity behind the clouding incense of some stately ritual, but Jesus as their brother and their friend, the plain working carpenter of Nazareth, the man of sorrows, who, even like themselves, was acquainted with grief.

They are seeking Him in no abstruse formula, but in the sympathetic greeting from human lips and the loving support in hours of temptation, of those who, in the service of their Master, and through years of self-oblation, have grown strong to save. "Love, not dogmas; life, not creeds"; this is the motto of the schools.

They provide a missing link between the churches and the people, an effective means for the translation of Christian doctrine into a living language of experience.

Luther might dub the Epistle of James, an "epistle of straw," but for the true Adult School "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. . . ."

We turn then to the subject of class visiting, duly recognising its fitness and importance in the Adult School polity.

Class Visiting.

In discussing this subject we shall best serve our purpose by selecting a concrete instance for description.

Our choice falls on the Barton Hill School at Bristol, but we do not therefore suggest that any one scheme of visiting is the best or that our example stands alone in its efficiency.

We have been influenced rather by the remarkable success of the school and the care with which its visiting system has been developed.

Barton Hill Branch which is described as Class VIII. of the Bristol

Adult School was founded in 1894. It stands in the heart of a densely populated artizan district,* the building having been specially erected for the purposes of the work.

The following table, giving the average attendance since the commencement, illustrates the excellent percentage of attendance secured.†

Year.	Membership.	Average Attendance.	Per Centage of Attendances.
1895	170	109	64
1896	350	245	70
1897	335	246	74
1898	342	252	74
1899	335	254	76
1900	383	278	73
1901	351	272	77
1902	377	288	77

The Barton Hill Branch (men), represents 35% of the total Bristol Adult School membership.

To understand the visiting system it will be necessary to take a rapid survey of the procedure adopted in the conduct of the class :—Before the opening of school a “fatherly man” lies in wait at the entrance with “a good hand-grip” for all arrivals. By 8.25 a.m. the Secretaries of the Burial, Sick and Coal Clubs, the Savings Bank, and the collectors of the Early Attendance Fund are sitting at the receipt of custom. At 8.30 School commences, a member gives out a hymn at the desk, and after a pause for vocal prayer the large company divide into small groups, each with a leader, to read through and consider the Bible Lesson for the day. The leader is himself “a scholar,” who has studied the lesson during the week for the benefit of his little circle.

In the meantime the registers of attendance are being marked by men chosen for their extensive personal knowledge of the class members.

The visiting books are now examined and prepared for a fresh week’s work.

At nine o’clock a bell sounds, the little groups merge once more into one large congregation. The class secretary reads out the notices for the week, reports are received from members and deputations who have visited

* Goulter Street, Queen Anne Road, Bristol.

† We give the F.F.D.S.A. figures, men only.

other schools, new members are introduced by name, and during the singing of a hymn, the collection is taken. "The axis on which the scheme revolves is the Bible Lesson," and this is now considered by the united School. Perfect freedom of discussion prevails under the chairmanship of the President, who endeavours to guide the debate to a practical issue, and to draw the conclusions as pointedly as may be.

The lesson at an end, the names of those who are absent through sickness are read, and inquiries as to their health, and visits paid to them are made; the number present is announced, another hymn is sung, and after a pause for prayer, the class separates about the hour of ten.

A Social Club, Swimming, Cricket and Football, Cycling and Rambling Clubs, a Temperance Society, Band of Hope, Lectures, Excursion and Benevolent Committees, Devotional Meetings upon Wednesdays, not to speak of annual, monthly, and other meetings, provide in a variety of ways for the social and religious intercourse which is the real life of the School.

But behind all this visible display of energy is the quiet yet indispensable work of the visitor. To quote a Barton Hill correspondent, "The importance of this department cannot be too strongly impressed."

The starting-point of good visiting is a well-kept register of the names and addresses of scholars, and to this end the class is divided into sections, each with an attendance register of its own. The circles are sufficiently small to ensure the proper mutual acquaintance of their members. Each member has a number, as in the time registers of a factory, and during the first half-hour of school a mark is entered against his number to record his attendance. The books then pass to the visiting secretaries who have been entering up in special visiting books from the admittance register the names of any who have been admitted to the school on the previous Sunday.

This admittance register is one into which the name of each new member is entered as he is accepted, together with the name of his introducer, the section he has joined, and the designation of the visiting book to which his name should be allocated. There are one or more visiting books for each section of the class, and the names of members living in outlying districts are placed together in district visiting books in order that the work of the visitor may be simplified as much as possible. At the beginning of each

visiting book appears an explanatory introduction,* followed by a full list of the names and addresses of all those for whom the Visitor is responsible, with the number of the class section as well as the member's number in that section duly set forth. When the Visiting Secretaries receive the sectional registers they at once enter up the "visiting books," the numbers only and not the names of the absentees entered, being given. The list at the beginning of the visiting-book already mentioned, tells the Visitor, should his memory fail him, both the address and the name for which the number stands. The visitor must report in writing before the following Sunday to the Visiting Secretary the reason for any absence recorded in his book, and if a member is absent four Sundays without good reason, his name is handed in writing to the Secretary, in order that special visitors may be sent. Both the ordinary and the special visitors are appointed annually, not to speak of sick visitors to whom all cases of illness are entrusted. A small sum of money is placed under the control of the latter by a "Benevolent Committee," in order that gifts of fruit and flowers may be made.

* Extracts from the instructions which form the preface to the Barton Hill Visitors' book.—

TO THE VISITORS.

"But ye brethren be not weary in well doing."

Visiting is an important part of our work, and to a large extent the life of the school depends on its regular and systematic carrying out.

Visitors should take care not to let absentees have cause to think of them in the same light as some children look upon School Board Officers.

No two men are alike and therefore it is useless to try the same methods with all men. The Visitors' duties are to endeavour to get the members on their book to attend school regularly, and if a visitor finds that calling has not the desired effect, try the man some other way—

- (a) Put his friends on his track.
- (b) Arrange for a neighbour to knock him up on Sundays and bring him to school.
- (c) Try and get him to become a member of the Early Attendance Fund.
- (d) See if he won't join one of the clubs.
- (e) Be sure to get his wife on your side.

A visitor should never be satisfied whilst he has lame ducks on his book.

The "dot and carry one" members give the most trouble and the visitor's aim should be to cure these members of their bad habits.

Some members do not like to be called on too often, and if the visitor knows of such a case it may be sometimes wisest not to intrude.

Visitors should always be living advertisements for the Adult School.

KEEP PEGGING AWAY.

Every visitor is supplied with cards* to be left at the houses of members not at home or to be posted in the event of the visitor being unable to call. One of the Class Presidents endeavours to visit each newcomer within five weeks of his joining the school, and also to write to him within a week of his first attendance.

Periodical visits are arranged in addition to this normal visiting, when volunteers visit every member of the class, each undertaking twenty or thirty names; and finally, every two or three years a complete canvass of what is called the Adult School Parish (in this case consisting of 4,000 houses), is entered upon.

A week prior to the canvass the district is paraded, a band and cart proceed with a procession of sympathisers from street to street, handbills are distributed, and speeches explaining the scope and purpose of the school are made at the various halts.

For the canvass itself visitors set out in twos, taking a street at a time and endeavouring to give a personal invitation at each house. Those who promise to come are called for, if considered doubtful, on Sunday morning.

It need hardly be insisted that excellent as this comprehensive system is found to be when it expresses the living energy of brotherly love, it would be futile once it became mechanical. The inner secret of successful visiting is sympathy.

* The following further details may be of interest :—

A President's letter is sent to all new members, lithographed and signed by the four presidents of the class. The presidents also use lithographed postcards as special whips to absentees. The following is the invitation printed upon the card left by the regular class-visitor when the absentee is not at home.

"Let Brotherly Love Continue."

FRIENDS' FIRST-DAY ADULT SCHOOL.

Dear Friend,

As we did not see you last Sunday, I have called on behalf of the Class to express our hope that it was not illness which prevented your attendance. We shall be very glad to see you amongst us again next Sunday, and trust that it may very seldom be necessary for you to be absent from our meetings.

On behalf of Barton Hill Class.

Signed _____

Date _____

In addition to sundry other devices we may mention the "Personal Effort Papers," sheets printed with the various forms of service (such as volunteer visiting), described in numbered sequence down one column, and with spaces for votes (*i.e.*, crosses made as on a ballot paper) opposite each item. These are distributed to be filled in during the week and returned signed; members are expected honourably to support their "votes."

Methods of Teaching in Adult Schools.

In our discussion of the work of visiting we incidentally outlined the conduct of a class which may be regarded as representative of a large number.

There are several systems in vogue, but they scarcely call for separate treatment, as they will be found to group themselves broadly under two main types. These, for the sake of convenience, we will call the *democratic* and the *autocratic*.

(a) *The "Democratic" Method.* The class already described may be taken as an example under this head.

A large congregation of men is split up into small groups, each with its leader, to consider and discuss the lesson. In the united class which follows, the President takes a comparatively subordinate place, presiding rather than teaching, endeavouring to call out and guide the discussion. Any direct contribution of his own, in the form of an address or exposition, is uniformly regarded as subordinate to the idea of free participation by the members of the class.

(b) *The "Autocratic" Method.* In this, though the title is scarcely fair in its strict application, we have an approximation to the conventional Sunday Bible Class. The procedure is by no means fixed, but the following may be regarded as fairly typical.

At 8.30 a.m. a hymn or prayer will mark the opening, and members will be registered as "early" or "late" in their attendance according to their arrival before or after this function.

Any elementary classes, for reading or writing, now collect under their respective teachers, while the central class as it is called, listens to a lecture on some scientific or historical subject, illustrated by diagrams or a lantern. At nine the bell is rung, the lecturer gives way to the teacher, the elementary classes rejoin the central, and a hymn is sung, accompanied perhaps by a volunteer band. The roll call follows, members responding to the Secretary with "before" or "after," according to the time of their arrival, and the register passes into the hands of the visiting secretaries. The teacher—he is not in such a school called the "president"—then gives out the chapter he has selected, which is read round a verse at a time by the men.

For half-an-hour or longer the teacher discourses, delivering in a more or less conversational manner what is in fact a carefully prepared address, asking at the close, and occasionally during the course, for questions. If these are forthcoming there may be a short discussion ; the notices for the week are then given out, and finally a prayer, which is generally offered by the teacher, and a hymn conclude the morning's exercise. Under such a system there is seldom any consideration of the lesson by the men beforehand, nor is the use of a lesson sheet by any means universal, the teacher often preferring to select his lesson in connection with some recent or prospective event, which happens to be of immediate interest. A great catastrophe of nature, some bill of importance before the Legislature, the crowning of a monarch, the death of a preacher or statesman, local horse-races, the public-house evil, or some recent book upon social or religious questions are all in their turn suitable to his purpose. On these occasions it is the usual practice to expound the Scripture and make use of the selected events by way of illustration.

These methods may either of them co-exist with more or less social life and work maintained during the week.

A class conducted on " democratic " lines may yet have but little to hold it together between the Sundays ; or a class addressed and practically conducted by the teacher may be associated with extensive social and religious activities, in which the men take a large and even an independent part.

It cannot be said decisively that the results flowing from these rival systems are always distinct.

The personality of the teacher, the degree of his social earnestness and the range of his spiritual vision, are factors which must upset any attempt at uniform classification. But there is a difference in principle which broadly and in the long run must have its effect. In one method the main idea is to evoke thought, in the other to impart instruction.

In forming an estimate of their relative value it must be recognised that neither method is free from its peculiar dangers.

Puerility or diffuseness in discussion are the snare of the " democratic " system, and the opportunity that is offered under a weak president to wind-bags and cranks, is not seldom availed of. Somewhat painful if amusing examples have come under our personal notice. What exactly

it was in the blast of Joshua's trumpets that levelled Jericho, fantastic speculation upon some obscure passage in Daniel, whether women should wear their hair in accordance with Pauline instruction, are questions which on three several occasions have occupied and divided a class. Schools for rabbinical disputation will do but little to leaven our social life, and this empty discussion upon trivial points can only repel robust and earnest minds. On the other hand, the careful lecture, packed with well-ordered information, unless it be accompanied with a direct individual challenge to mental and spiritual exercise, tends to complacency and the absence of evangelical zeal.

The men will gather for an "intellectual treat," they become critical and expect much from the teacher. They look with mild contempt upon the ordinary fare which satisfies their fellows, and admire themselves not a little for the nicety of their own taste.

If the "democratic" method is in danger of Rabbinism, then Pharisaism is the danger of the "autocratic." The Rabbi splits hairs, the Pharisee thanks God that he is not as his brethren.

We doubt, and the doubt is based upon observation, whether the question of the *method* as distinct from the *subject-matter* of teaching has always received proper attention.

Unquestionably the "democratic" principle as shown forth in a class modelled upon the plan of Socrates, is the soundest from the standpoint of the Adult School. It requires, however, great judgment and a large endowment of the gift of sympathy for its true development. The big thoughts which lie embedded in the Scriptures like erratic blocks, must be dug out and the men must dig with the teacher. If the teacher be wanting in spiritual power, and hardly less if he be wanting in *bonhomie*, and a saving sense of humour, the cranks will master him; and should he fail in a thorough knowledge of his subject, and lack material and imagination, the hour will be wasted in platitude. It is no light task to undertake the direction of minds untrained to thought and starved by inadequate education. So great are the difficulties that many teachers abandon the struggle to fall back, not of choice but in despair, upon the "autocratic" method.

To abandon such a task is, however, to abandon one great purpose of

the Adult School. The lesson should be not so much a sermon that is listened to, as a co-operative exercise of spiritual and mental faculties, under qualified guidance.

Mr. Gladstone used to speak of the "Divine *work* of worship," and the principle he recognised when he coined the phrase, should find its place, if anywhere, in an Adult School.

It is better to teach men to think for themselves upon things vital to the health of their souls, than merely to fill them with information as children are fed with a spoon.

Doubtless there have been occasions where the men have said to the teacher "We do not want to hear each other talk. We know what the others know. We want to hear you. You have had the better education. You have books that are beyond our reach, and knowledge where we are ignorant. You must give us what you have, in simple form, that we may understand and learn."

There is real force in such a plea, though the remedy does not lie in accepting the "autocratic" method, but in skilfully combining information with question and answer. If, however, the "democratic" principle is the soundest, it is also a prevailing weakness in classes conducted upon the "democratic" plan that the actual substance of the lesson often amounts to very little.

The teacher has not only let the reins fall into the hands of some contentious spirit, but the thought he has put into the lesson has been weak. The big ideas have not been "dug out;" no proper knowledge has been brought to bear upon the meaning of the texts; the deductions have not been forceful and the men have not been stirred.

Sometimes the "democratic" system seems to be regarded as if it possessed in itself some quality of magic. It is sufficient to *be* "democratic" and the rest will follow as a matter of course!

But a class must have its *message*, whatever the system under which it is conducted may be, and in every case it is imperative, whether the teacher gives an address or guides a discussion, that he study his subject carefully beforehand.

It is a dangerous boast that the "democratic" teacher may go to his class with an open mind, and that his very want of preparation is an

advantage. Where the teacher is rich in spiritual experience and mental equipment, such want of preparation may lie merely on the surface, but where the want is real, nothing but disaster can ensue.

Common sense forbids us to press the "democratic" principle so far as to divest the teacher of his peculiar office and responsibility. He may conceal himself behind the title of "President"; he may—nay, he must,—efface himself wherever possible, and seek to bring out the best qualities of manhood in those he meets by every art within his compass; but he cannot delegate his work, for in the last resort, call him "President" or what you will, he remains a teacher.

No system should ever be made an excuse for avoiding the labour of preparation. Even now slovenly teaching has worked much harm, and not infrequently a lazy dependence upon lesson sheets and platitudes takes the place of strenuous individual effort to grasp and meet the deepest needs of toiling men.

If we offer haphazard ideas, weak thought that has cost nothing, borrowed sentiments from some handy text-book, we give our work the stamp of insincerity.

The remark has sometimes been made that there are schools which attract only the "namby-pamby," and that the more virile remain outside in the ranks of the scornful and indifferent. This is the consequence to be expected of such slovenliness, and the Adult School teacher must be on his guard lest he repeat the experience of the Churches.

There are men whose natural bent is piety, they are easily attracted, and on them even the "goody-goody" does not pall; but to attract only the godly is failure. It is not they that are whole who need a physician but they that are sick.

The charmed circle of the public indifference will not be broken without hard labour of mind and soul.

He who would break the spell must be baptized into sympathy with the travail of the poor, must know the stress of their temptation, and possess a living gospel ever pressing for utterance; he must be certain of his aim, clear in his vision; like Savonarola stern and like St. Francis tender; in his directness tactful and simple like John Woolman, and in all things faithful to the loving rule of Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

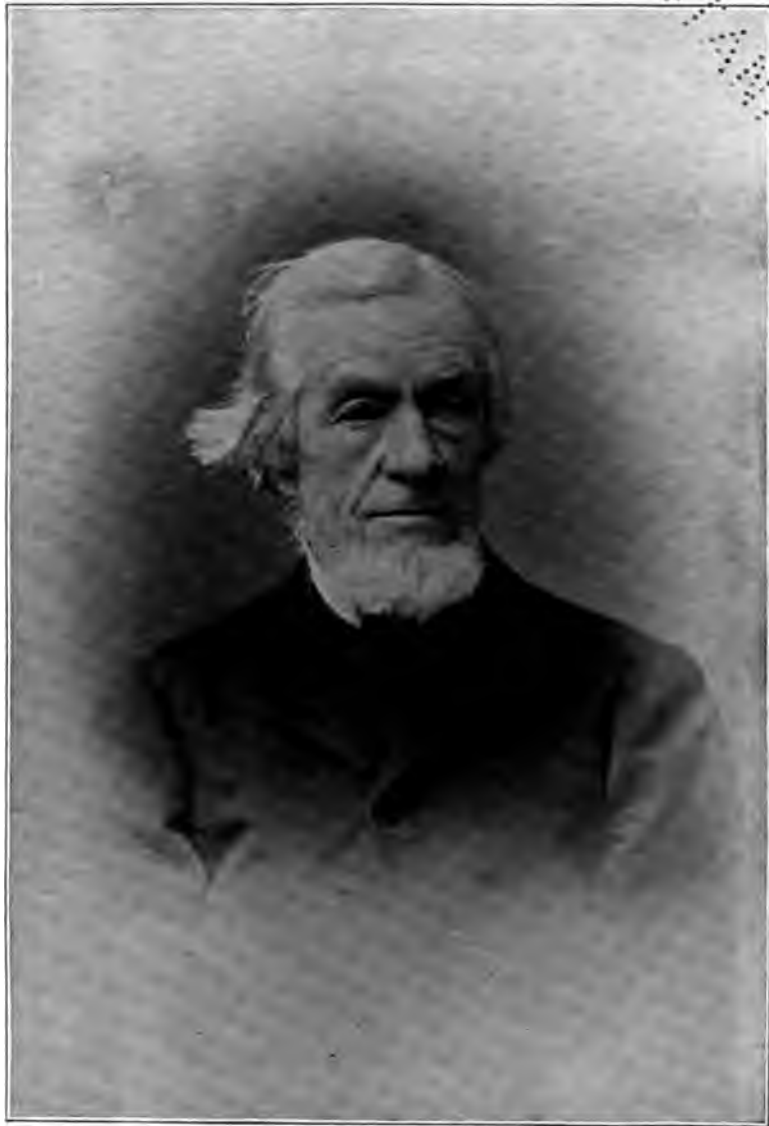
“When the new light that we beg for shines in upon us, there be who envy and oppose it if it come not first in at their casements.”—*John Milton*.

WE have now discussed in some detail the organisation of the class. It remains for us to note the present tendency of the movement, its more pressing problems, and the possibilities of the near future.

Social Clubs.

Even a cursory examination into the history of Adult Schools soon impresses us with their ever increasing scope, and recent evidence brings into prominence the value of the Social Club, as an adjunct to the strictly religious exercise of the Sunday School.

Everywhere the same story is being told. The men are no longer satisfied to meet in a hired room on Sundays only, but demand quarters of their own, a club-house, replete with the usual paraphernalia of social recreation. As we have seen, a social hall, a women's drawing-room, reading, games, and billiard rooms, a gymnasium, a kitchen, baths, and even allotments are already regarded as appropriate to the work. The number of schools fully emancipated from the narrower conception of Adult School enterprise may as yet be small, but it is impossible to evade the conclusion that we are now upon the eve of a great development in the social side of the Adult School. Nor need we quarrel with this symptom. It is and ought to be the outcome of the practical character of the lessons for which a generation of teachers has been famed. It is not an alien growth but an inevitable expansion, which men like William White long ago foresaw. We may indeed, from a broader standpoint, regard it with unmixed satisfaction. Our towns, smitten with the feverish passion for wealth and the lust for selfish pleasure, stand in sore need of social havens, where brotherhood may take refuge and gather strength in peace.



Lambert Weston & Son,]

[Photographers, Folkestone.

Very truly yours
William White
—

SECRET

The public-house, drinking-club, and the low-class music hall are the mistaken expression of a legitimate social instinct. The opposition of the religious, though right in its motive, has been too negative in its character, and a false distinction between the religious and the secular has debarred many from useful and practical work.

It is impossible to reflect upon the present social, political, and religious outlook without recognising the pressing necessity for some wholesome leavening influence working through the great masses of our population. The social question becomes ever more grave. Observers tell us that under the pressure of town life the morale and physique of our manhood is rapidly deteriorating, and no one who saw London on Mafeking Day ; no one who glances at that halfpenny press which is the mental pabulum of hundreds of thousands, or who studies the figures of Booth and Rowntree, can doubt that the facts at present point steadily in the wrong direction.

Politics, in the absence of the idealism of which Mazzini was the prophet, are saturated with the opportunism of party strife.

Men care neither for Parliament nor good government, nor in any serious sense for the responsibilities of Empire. Sober thought has given place to panegyrics on racial prowess, and the love of truth to the passion for sensation.

With the masses, religion is at a discount. In spite of her churches, England is barely conscious of a spiritual basis to her national life.

A recent religious census in Liverpool and London would seem to indicate that only about one-seventh of the population is in the habit of attending public worship.

Though Christian charity and ethics have doubtless a wide and subtle influence, vast regions of conduct are still unilluminated by the Gospel, and remain under the sway of selfish motives, governed by sentiment that is pagan in its origin and form.

Will the Adult Schools recognise the greatness of their possibilities ?

The churches have practically failed to draw the people under their direct influence, religion is scouted by the majority as something unreal, and without the living touch of Christian sympathy there is little hope that their attitude will change. Let the Adult Schools cover the great cities

with their parishes, establish their clubs in each inferno of grimed and sodden streets, and bring the witness of Christian fellowship to every home.* Clubs are a social necessity, they are springing up everywhere, though, alas ! too often under the auspices of the brewer.

* In any systematic development of Adult School clubs, and the partition of a large city into Adult School parishes, the questions both of finance and organisation will be of importance.

In regard to finance, no satisfactory evidence is obtainable, but the following figures, representing in part the actual experience of two fairly successful clubs, may be suggestive.

Example A. Building, etc., amounted to about £1,000, of which between four and five hundred pounds was given by Friends, and the remainder raised on loan.

The abstract of accounts for the year ending September 30th, 1902, is as follows :—

DR.	£	s.	d.	CR.	£	s.	d.
To receipts from Billiard Tables -	-	48	9 0	By Balance due to Treas., October, 1901	5	5	11½
„ rent from School -	-	24	0 0	„ Coal, Coke, Gas, etc. -	-	22	13 8½
„ Members' (80) Subscriptions -	-	16	5 1	„ Interest on Loan -	-	18	14 10
„ Receipts from Concerts -	-	2	18 8	„ Repairs and Replacements -	-	16	16 11
„ Profit on Sale of Refreshments -	-	2	17 5	„ Rates, Taxes, Water, Insurance -	-	16	15 9
„ Baths -	-	2	10 10	„ Caretaker -	-	9	10 7
„ Sundries -	-	1	1 9	„ Incidentals -	-	5	12 9
				„ Papers -	-	3	14 11½
				„ Billiard Marker -	-	3	9 0
	98	2	9		102	14	5½
Balance due to Treasurer -	-	4	11 8½	Balance due to Treasurer -	-	4	11 8½
	102	14	5½	Loans -	-	650	11 3

Example B. Building, etc., amounted to about £2,000, of which £230 was raised by a sale of work, £700 remains on loan, and the remainder was given.

The abstract of accounts for the year ending September 30th, 1902, is as follows :—

DR.	£	s.	d.	CR.	£	s.	d.
To Balance in hand October 1st, 1901 -	3	5	11½	By Reduction of Loan -	-	50	0 0
„ Receipts from Billiard Tables -	57	7	11	„ Caretaker's Wages -	-	48	11 8
„ Proceeds from Sale of Work -	50	0	0	„ Gas, Coal, Coke, etc. -	-	24	6 1
„ Proceeds from Concerts and Socials -	42	0	2½	„ Interest on Loans -	-	15	5 0
„ Proceeds from Sunday Collections -	18	5	5	„ Repairs and Replacements -	-	15	0 3
„ Members' Subscriptions -	17	12	5	„ Refreshments -	-	12	18 7
„ Sale of Refreshments, etc. -	16	17	5	„ Fitting Baths -	-	12	16 6
„ Donations -	6	1	0	„ Incidentals -	-	11	16 2
„ Sale of Papers, etc. -	3	4	8½	„ Expenses Concerts and Socials -	-	11	14 1
„ Gymnasium Subscriptions -	2	13	0	„ Rates, Taxes, etc. -	-	7	12 9
				„ Newspapers and Periodicals -	-	7	4 2
				„ Interest due on Loan -	-	34	10 0
	217	7	10½		251	15	3
Balance due to Treasurer -	-	34	7 4½	Balance due to Treasurer -	-	34	7 4½
	251	15	3	Loan -	-	700	0 0

It will be clear even from the above incomplete figures that the financial aspects of expansion require thought. It may be remarked that the building in the first example

There can hardly be any work so immediately hopeful, or more in accord with the spirit of the day, than the wide development of these clubs, free from "the drink," and upon the religious basis of the Adult School ideal.

We say religious advisedly, for though the work may seem largely secular it must be permeated in every part with the religious spirit if it is to win its way as a permanent force. It has been said that clubs can only be successful if they have the drink or gambling interest at their back, or failing these, a religious or political motive, and we do not doubt the general truth of this statement.

Our interest in Adult School clubs does not however rest solely in their service to the community at large. In the past the Adult School has done more to generate spiritual energy than to direct or to employ it, and here in this definite linking of the religious and social lies the germ of a movement, the scope and purport of which is almost illimitable.

The emphatic association of social responsibility with religious profession is precisely that achievement for which men wait. The measure of our failure in the past is the measure of our weakness in this particular relation. The hideous problem of poverty, those sombre figures of starvation and want which tell the tale of our selfishness, can find solution only in a community where the social conscience is tender and informed.

In the Sunday Class, let utterance be given to the glad Evangel, but through the agencies of the club, let words crystallise in work. For if these clubs are to be a social leaven working for

quoted is capable of being converted into cottages, whereas in the second example it is on the lines of a public institute, with a commodious hall. Experience points to the great advantage of homeliness. It is neither necessary nor desirable to erect showy or costly buildings in which the men do not feel at ease, and it is of importance on this account that they should not be too large.

With regard to local organisation, the Severn Street Adult School Council (Birmingham), already referred to in a previous paper, which was formed on December 11th, 1901, is an instructive development. The scheme which has been in force throughout 1902 is briefly as follows :—

An administrative body is constituted, comprising the "teachers' meeting" and representatives of the different school centres. The representation is based on the average attendance, at the rate of one for every fifty, or part thereof up to 200, and one for every hundred or part thereof above that number. The whole of the business of the teachers' meeting passes to the council, the former body meeting separately only to discuss questions which bear directly upon the work of teaching.

An Executive Committee of twelve is appointed, and the council meets six times in the year. The number of representatives, in addition to teachers, was at the outset sixty-three.

righteousness, they must give practical interpretation to the words of Christ, "He that seeketh his life shall lose it ; but he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." Having formed the club, and gathered the fellowship, it is only too easy to draw the blinds, and shut the door against the outer world.

We shall need to cultivate the spirit which has driven the scholars of the Birmingham Schools to take old public-houses in the slums, and open them to the lowest and most degraded men.

The Adult Schools must be a true order of St. Francis, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. And theirs must be the evangelical gospel of freedom and hope, not narrowly or doctrinally interpreted, but in the broadest charity and in the deepest faith.

Modern Thought and the Adult School.

And here we come to what, in the near future, will form an increasing difficulty. The Adult Schools have passed the elementary stage when reading and writing were considerable items in their curriculum.

Not only so, but the lessons have advanced somewhat from their simple character, and touch a wider range of subjects. Questions which at first would never occur become inevitable as discussion, thought and increasing knowledge give them shape.

Simple homely truths and practical exhortation have now as ever their place in every good teacher's repertory. For many generations there will yet be men whose conceptions of religion are primitive, and who will need the simplest and plainest instruction.

But especially in those schools which draw their members from among the better paid and better educated artizans, and which have been successful in attracting support from that great majority which remains outside organized Christianity, fundamental questions of belief, echoes of the great controversy which has raged for half a century, are already being raised.

The Adult Schools have barely as yet touched the fringe of the indifference which in matters religious reigns throughout a great section of the working class.

And with all respect for the teachers of long experience and great ability who conduct so many of our schools to-day, we are not sure whether

there is amongst them any proper conception of the extent to which not only scornful unbelief, but deep distrust of orthodox religion prevails.

One great cause for this attitude of sullen or active hostility lies, no doubt, in the glaring contrast between our social inequality and injustice and the professions of the Christian pulpit.

"By their fruits ye shall know them"! is the mocking answer to the preaching of the Cross.

But we shall make a serious mistake if we believe that here we find our full explanation.

Practical sincerity and living sympathy will always outweigh theory in the balance, but even when we put ourselves right in this relation there remains the intellectual question. It is contrary to the fact to suppose that working men are not affected by the changes of the last fifty years. They may have but an imperfect knowledge of what has passed, but they have nevertheless their literature, and in coarse free-thinking pamphlets have gleaned something of the long combat waged in the upper atmosphere of the intellectual world.*

Moreover they have not as a rule (we speak of the great majority), that traditional reverence born of careful nurture in the faith which serves as a check to the riot of iconoclasm in which so many have indulged.

The Bible never had the hold upon their imagination or their hearts that it has within the church. Such stories as the swallowing of Jonah, and the conversion of Lot's wife, pressed upon them as history, appear wildly incredible, and offend not so much their reason as their common sense. Not permitted to discriminate between legend and history, they accept the Bible as it is presented to them in the conventional way, and treat the whole as false. The gravest injury is thus done them by those whose motives are the best and whose whole desire is to preserve the faith and save the souls of men.

We must give the best surety of our practical sincerity in our social life, but on the other we must so express our faith that it may appeal on the deepest grounds with swift and sure effect. There must be no make believe; to ignore the progress of religious thought and to reject its consequence is idle.

* We wonder, for instance, how many Adult School teachers have read *Reynolds' Newspaper*, and the free-thinking tracts that are circulated by the score in the workshops. Unless we "sit where the people sit," we can scarcely expect to reach them.

Doubts, difficulties, questions of Biblical interpretation will need courageous handling and knowledge adequate to the task. Our timidity is on every ground mistaken ; Paul, debating in the School of Tyrannus did not, we may be sure, shrink from the encounter with Greek and Hindu mystics or the devotees of the great Diana. Only let us remember this, that Paul had knowledge and the baptism of his desert encounter. Our modern Paul has no less need of that baptism, but he must also enter the school of the Biblical scholar and learn his craft.

The Adult School teacher of the immediate future will require indeed a much more thorough equipment than he at present possesses if he is to realise all the great possibilities of the movement which he represents. And he will require a rare judgment, for it is not disintegration, but the up-building of a living faith that must be his aim.

In himself, in his Church, and in his Adult School there is the common need for a deeper foundation to belief. Criticism in destroying some part of the super-structure is rendering us this highest service, that it is slowly but surely thrusting us back upon the experience of the soul as the final resting-place of faith. It is but working out to its logical conclusion the uncompleted task of the Reformation.

The Denominational Question.

In discussing this problem of teaching we are reminded that another and a different question will call for an early settlement.

In the history of the Adult Schools it is clear that we have recently entered on what may be termed a fresh stage in the journey. It will be noticed that the striking developments in the last ten years have taken place in Schools which are not under the care of Friends. The Leicestershire movement, for instance, though in the first place it owed much to Quaker initiative, has in its subsequent development been purely inter-denominational.

In other directions we notice an increasing tendency to go outside the membership of the Society of Friends when adding to the teaching staff.

It may well be that judgment on the value of such a movement as that in Leicestershire will be premature until it has stood the further test of time, but it is certainly neither possible nor desirable to confine the

Adult School movement to the limits set by the strength of a single denomination.* If Friends have had an honourable part in starting the Adult Schools upon their career they must cheerfully encourage the spread of the movement even when it passes beyond their borders. The formation of the National Council marks the opening of the door to unlimited expansion, and we may suitably reflect for a moment on the consequences ; for it is here that the question we wish to discuss arises.

We rightly speak of the Adult School Movement as undenominational, and we desire its expansion upon the lines which have grown familiar.

But none the less, in the best Schools under the care of Friends, the Quaker view of life has inevitably been presented, and has inevitably affected the scholars.

There has, it is true, been no exaltation of a sect, but in the nature of the case the Quaker conceptions of priesthood, and of a spiritual as opposed to a military ideal of fellowship have found expression. There is besides an indefinable quality arising out of long dependance upon an inward strength, and a freedom from the priestly or professional elements in religious life, which, if we may venture to say so, has, among all his many weaknesses, given the Quaker his peculiar force.

We should regard with dismay any change in organisation which weakened his influence or hampered his freedom.

At present more than half the representatives upon the National Council are members of the Society of Friends. This, however, cannot long continue. If the Movement grows, as we trust it may, the proportion of Quaker representation upon the central body must automatically decline.

At present the National Council is in close touch with the older Schools, and is largely governed by the ideas of their founders. But in ten or twenty years other religious denominations may preponderate, and without any sectarian bias, must inevitably influence the Council, not perhaps by their particular views so much as by their habit of mind. If a man has been trained a Wesleyan or a Quaker, that training will remain, whether he

* The 13th annual report of the Leicestershire Adult School Union was read to a meeting of nearly 4,000 working men. It records an increase of no less than 1,454 members during 1902, comprising 1,027 men and 427 women. The increase in 1901 was 1,146, or for 1901-2 no less than 2,600. The Union now comprises 87 schools and a total membership of 7,400.

be engaged in undenominational work or not. Paul had been trained under the Rabbis, and to the last that training shows itself in the Rabbinical subtleties and methods of his exegesis.

All this is not to argue against the National Council—far from it. We desire only that thought should be given to what is really a new issue. Hitherto, to within a recent period, the Adult School Movement was in the hands of Friends. It was undenominational in the sense that all creeds or none could find a home in the class, but it was essentially denominational in that its teachers were members of one religious body.

Undenominationalism has now taken a step forward, and the teachers no longer represent a single church.

It is too soon to say what this may mean. The experience of Leicestershire is hopeful, but there the movement is still in the flush of its first ardours, and we can only await events. The larger Adult School movement, as represented by the National Council, will certainly encounter new dangers, though the original conception of the work may continue sufficiently strong to carry it through any serious crisis that may arise.

In any case the experiment is as daring as it is novel, and every student of church history will watch it with interest.

Denominations as widely separate as the Anglican and Primitive Methodist may find themselves co-operating in a common work. How far, or how long, this union can continue, and whether it will lead to the blessed result of promoting greater harmony between the different members of the Church Universal, must remain an open question. In the meantime we would point out two matters which seem to us to demand consideration.

In the first place, is it not desirable, in view of the rapid enlargement of the work upon untried lines, that a more definite statement should be put forward as to the aim and ideal of the movement?

We are not now speaking so much of the *method* of work as of the *substance* of the message. Nor do we plead for a cut and dried catechism or a doctrinal creed, but for a living expression in fitting terms of the practical nature of the work and the social and spiritual ideals at which the movement is aimed. Such a charter of liberty may be a valuable unifying influence at a critical period in Adult School history.

And in the second place, we would urge the importance of preserving the character and freedom of those schools which are or may continue to be under the exclusive care of Friends.

At present two main organisations exist, the National Council and the Friends' First-Day School Association.

Having regard to the future, we should look upon it as a serious mistake to merge the two into one, and yet, while there is no antagonism between them, there is clearly a repetition in function which must increasingly tend to confusion. It seems to us that careful thought should be directed to such a re-adjustment in the organisation as, while putting an end to the present overlap, shall preserve that needful link between the Society of Friends and its Adult Schools, and that sense of unity amongst them, which we are satisfied it is important to maintain. The value of maintaining this link will be the more evident when we take into account a tendency that has recently shown itself with some insistence in connection with the Friends' Adult Schools. These are regarded by Friends as supplementary to existing churches, and the argument runs that any scholar of no denomination would, when he felt called, enter that fellowship most suited to his need. So far as the Adult School itself is concerned there is no reason whatever why this liberty should not continue, indeed it is of the essence of the Adult School spirit that it should.

But a desire is now growing up in several quarters for the establishment of a religious meeting in association with the Adult School. Many Friends' Schools have their mission meeting, an evening gathering which tends more and more to partake of the character of a settled congregation, met for the purposes of worship. What is to be the outcome of this? It cannot be desirable to establish another sect, but the wish for church fellowship is legitimate and natural. Large numbers of the scholars, in some schools the majority, belong to no church, and having found comradeship in the class feel little inclination to worship among strangers in a building with which they have had no previous connection. The class does not profess to give the opportunity for worship, but why should they not seek it under its auspices and among those with whom they have shared the privileges of the School.

Are we not here on the outskirts of a larger question? Is it not possible

that the Adult Schools are destined to modify or develop our ideas of church fellowship and of public worship, and to provide those elements which, if we judge by the religious census alone, would appear to be wanting?

We cannot pursue this subject further, but it appears obvious that in association with those Schools which are under the care of Friends, there may be a great opportunity for the development of congregational worship, free in its practice but spiritual in its foundation.

It is not desirable to found another sect, but it is surely desirable that those who have benefited at the hands of Friends, or of others, in the fellowship of the Adult class, should seek to make the union closer in the common bond of service, and of love. We repeat that by indirect means, it may be the Adult School mission to promote a *rapprochement*, in which the churches, abandoning the straitness of tradition shall, in the liberty of the Spirit, accept a wider responsibility and, adapting themselves to changing needs, extend their fellowship and increase their power.

Conclusion.

But whatever be the immediate problems before us we can plainly discern, beyond the difficulties of the hour, an opening vista of service. The idea of the Adult School, if it be faithfully realised, will prove a benediction, drowning the strife of cursing tongues, and healing, with the blessed peace of God, the ailment of Society.

The war between labour and capital, the bitterness of selfish competition, the poverty that shames our land, the lovelessness of souls that know no Christ, call with one mighty voice for the labours of self-sacrificing love. May teachers and scholars share alike the mantle and the staff of this service, and build in their measure, and under God's redeeming power, the City of the Happy Souls.

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A.S. = Adult School.

F.F.D.S.A. = Friends' First-Day School Association.

N.C. = National Council of Adult Schools.

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